

ST ACTION

THE WORLD'S ONLY DEDICATED
ST GAMES MAGAZINE

ISSUE 21 JANUARY 1990
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10
GLENSIDE
(11)

WHO'LL WIN THE
VECTOR WARS?

OVER 30 PAGES OF THE LATEST ST GAMES REVIEWED:
GHOULS 'N' GHOSTS, NORTH & SOUTH, BATMAN
POWER DRIFT, HARD DRIVIN', FIENDISH FREDDY!

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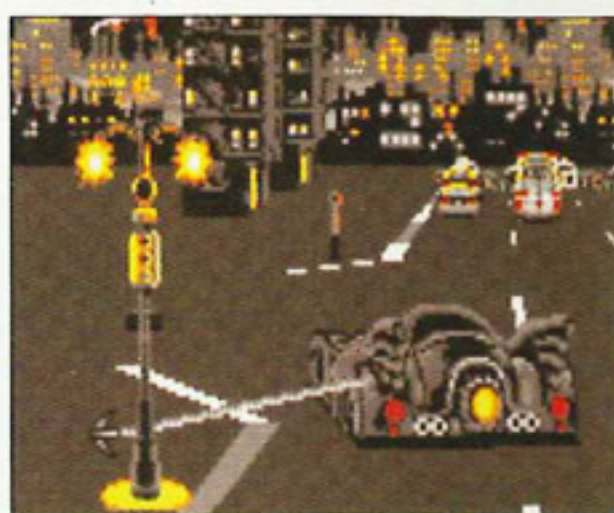
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PACKED

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BATMAN PAGE 86

After what seems an eternity, Batman arrives on the ST - STA goes to work.

WHO'LL WIN THE VECTOR WARS PAGE 19

Jason Spiller dons his flying scarf and goggles and sets out to find out who will emerge the winner in this dogfight.

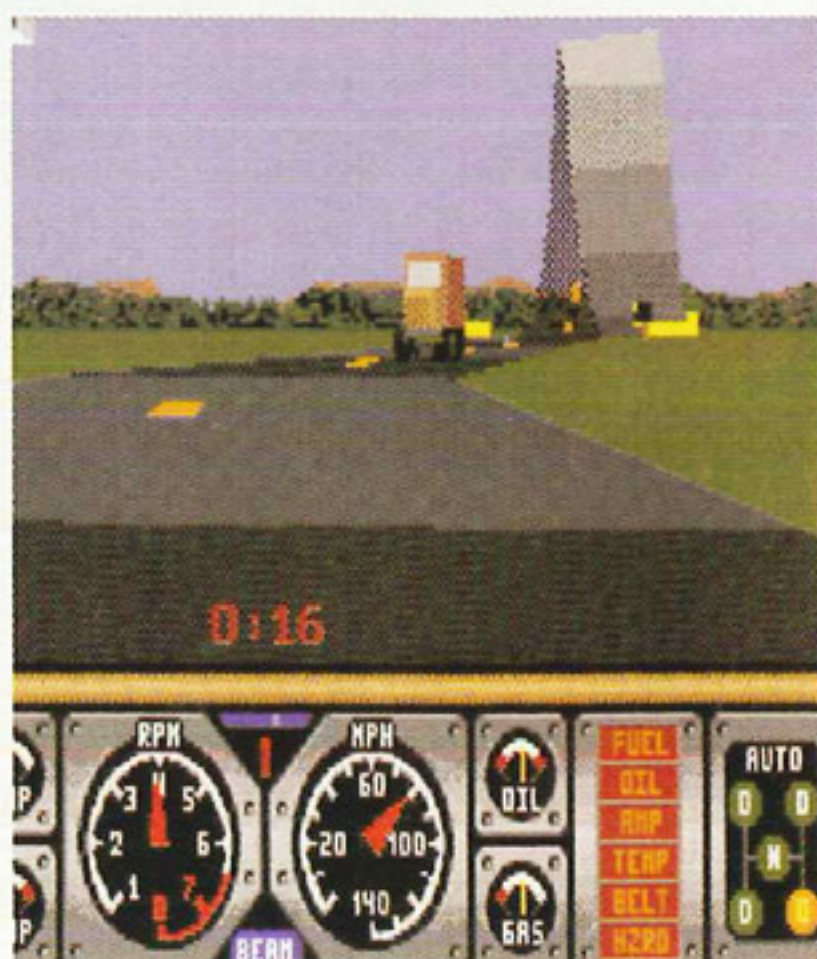


SUPER WONDERBOY PAGE 70

Tom-tom returns as that nappy-clad hero as, once again, he makes his way through the dangerous streets and tunnels of Monsterland.

WIN!

Electronic Arts are offering a rather swish TV/Monitor as the main prize in a compo to celebrate their past and, hopefully, future hits.



HARD DRIVIN' PAGE 34

Probably the most hyped game since Powerdrift, Domark's Hard Drivin' takes the genre one step further.



FIENDISH FREDDY PAGE 82

All the thrills, spills and adventure of the circus, as you attempt to save your show from bankruptcy - not to mention the anti-hero of the title.



POWERDRIFT PAGE 48

Following last month's taster, ZZKJ's conversion is ready for review. Did it impress us? Well, you'll just have to read on to find out, won't you!

NORTH AND SOUTH PAGE 80

From the same people who brought us Stir Crazy over a year ago, North and South offers all the fun and excitement missing from the mini-series!



GHOULS'N'GHOSTS PAGE 66

It's not often a sequel is released before its predecessor, but it happened here! Ghouls'n'Ghosts arrives and scares the younger members of STA half to death...



ACTION PACKED FEATURES!

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ONSLAUGHT PAGE 46

Hewson's colourful romp prompts us to dress up like wenches and say 'Hey nonny nonny' a lot.

SWITCH BLADE PAGE 74

Core Design's newbie for Gremlin looks set to be their best game yet.



GTGA: LOADSA TIPS PAGE 90

This month, oh wonderful reader, we give you absolutely tons of hints and tips for Xenon II, Total Eclipse and Bloodwych, amongst others.

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ACTION NEWS

CHOCKS AWAY CHAPPIES

Aircraft simulations are in abundance, and the horizon is darkened by vector-graphic wings - the new era in computer flight. Actual Screenshots have combined sprites and Vector graphics in Lancaster, which will receive a full review in next month's edition of STA. A combination of bombing action, adventure and strategy, you can assume the role of pilot, rear gunner or navigator in numerous missions over occupied territory. Dawn, day and night raids introduce a variety of hazards and you can get in some flying action in an instructor mode. In addition to simulating flight in one of these old buzzards, AS have attempted to convey the atmosphere and character of an RAF base during the war with Cinematic sequences and individual characterization of officers.

Well, hello there, and welcome to this month's issue of the world's only dedicated ST games magazine, ST Action. I'm sure you'll agree that this month's issue contains some of the most hotly awaited games this year. Almost everyone has something on offer, the most prolific games being either car racing-style ones or cutesy platform-jumping ones - which do you prefer? Meanwhile, our ever resourceful reporter, Jason 'Dad' Spiller, investigates what's happening in the development houses. It certainly looks as though vector graphic games are going to prove popular over the coming months. Also, hidden amongst the numerous reviews, we've a great edition of Giving The Game Away. Finally, we've also got a great competition in which you've got the chance to win your very own TV/monitor.

FIREBIRD TAKE TO THE SKIES

Become one of the few; pull on your faithful flying jacket and head out to the runway. There, waiting for you, is your Republic P47 Thunderbolt. Clamber aboard and reach for the skies. Yes, Firebird's latest epic is a conversion of the classic Jaleco arcade game, P47. Posing as a well-known U.S. Pilot, you must overcome insurmountable odds as you battle against the might of the Japanese military. Your adversaries are everywhere - on the land, in the water and in the air! The ST version also

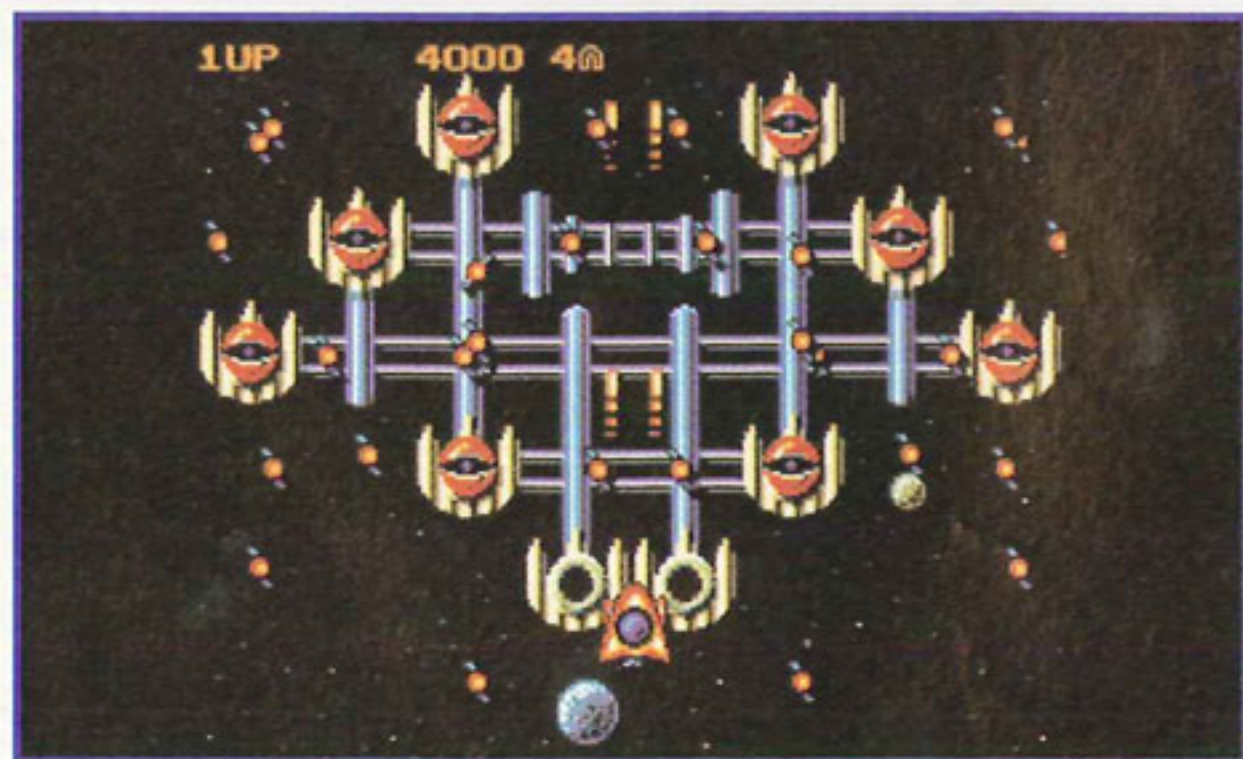
features a simultaneous two-player mode in which you and a comrade may join forces in an attempt to annihilate the enemy. As you battle through the eight stages you'll have the opportunity to add extra weapons to your plane and, boy, you'll need them. Guarding the end of each level will be a huge enemy vehicle and, only after you have destroyed it, will you be allowed to enter the next war-zone.

P47 will carry a price tag of £24.99 and should be available at the beginning of January.



Battle against the might of the Japanese military in the classic Jaleco arcade game.

THE ST S.E.U.C.K. IS HERE!



S.E.U.C.K. is fully menu-driven and very user-friendly. The package includes three complete S.E.U.C.K. written games that can be fully investigated.

There can't be anyone who hasn't played some sort of shoot'em-up and thought to themselves, "Gosh, I could write something like this. If only I knew how to program machine code...". Sounds familiar eh? Well now, thanks to Outlaw software, you have the chance to create your own games. At last, Palace Software are proud to announce the ST version of The Shoot'Em-Up Construction Kit. Unlike other games creators, such as STOS, no real programming ability is needed to produce state-of-the-art blaster games. ST owners will be able to create their

sprites and animate them. Backdrops are also easy to recreate as the package includes a scenery editor. Games created can be fully tested using the in-built cheat modes and, when you're happy with the game you may even add sound effects and background tunes. Apparently the sound creator is so good that Palace will be using it on all of their future ST products! Finally, when you've created your masterpiece you'll be able to save it to disk as a program file, thus being able to distribute it among your friends. The Shoot'Em-Up Construction Kit will be available from the beginning of December and will cost £19.99.

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RELEASE ONE

Throughout its long history, France has seen many disasters and spectacular events. During the XV century, this land was close to extinction ... a miracle was needed. That Miracle was Joan of Arc.

Available on:
Atari ST • Amiga • IBM PC

RELEASE TWO

Is it a dream? Certainly not!!! Hollywood Poker Pro takes you into the exciting world of high stakes gambling. Realistic and testing game play against your choice of 1 to 4 of the most accomplished and glamorous players you'll ever meet – they not only look fantastic, they play a mean game of poker too.

Available on: Atari ST • Amiga

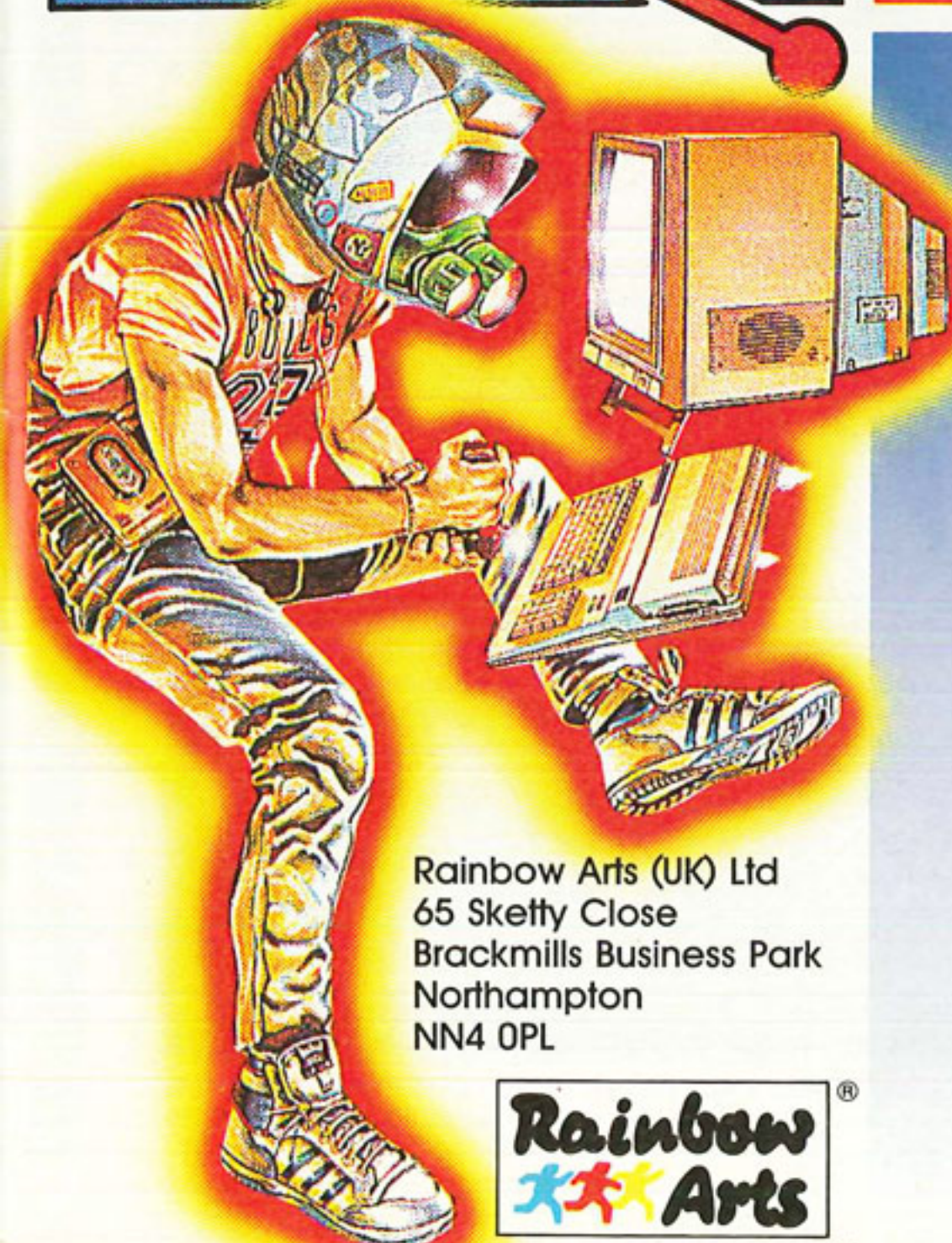


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Rainbow Arts



The long-awaited smash-hit game, Chase HQ has finally been completed and should be in a shop near you, now!



OCEAN READY WITH A WAVE OF ST GAMES

The Manchester-based company, Ocean Software, are about to unleash their Christmas collection onto the games-hungry public. All you ST owners can expect to see The Untouchables, Chase HQ and Cabal before the end of the winter silly season. Chase HQ is a conversion of the smash-hit coin-op game in which you and your partner must drive through numerous streets in search for various dangerous criminals. Cabal is a two-player blow'em-to-bits-style game in which you and a friend must take on the might of an army. Finally, The Untouchables sees you playing the parts of the New York police chiefs as you attempt to rid the city of various underworld gangsters.



The two-player option in Ocean's Cabal helps to ensure that everyone can enjoy this mammoth blow'em-to-bits-style game

CARRIER COMMAND 2 CALLED UP

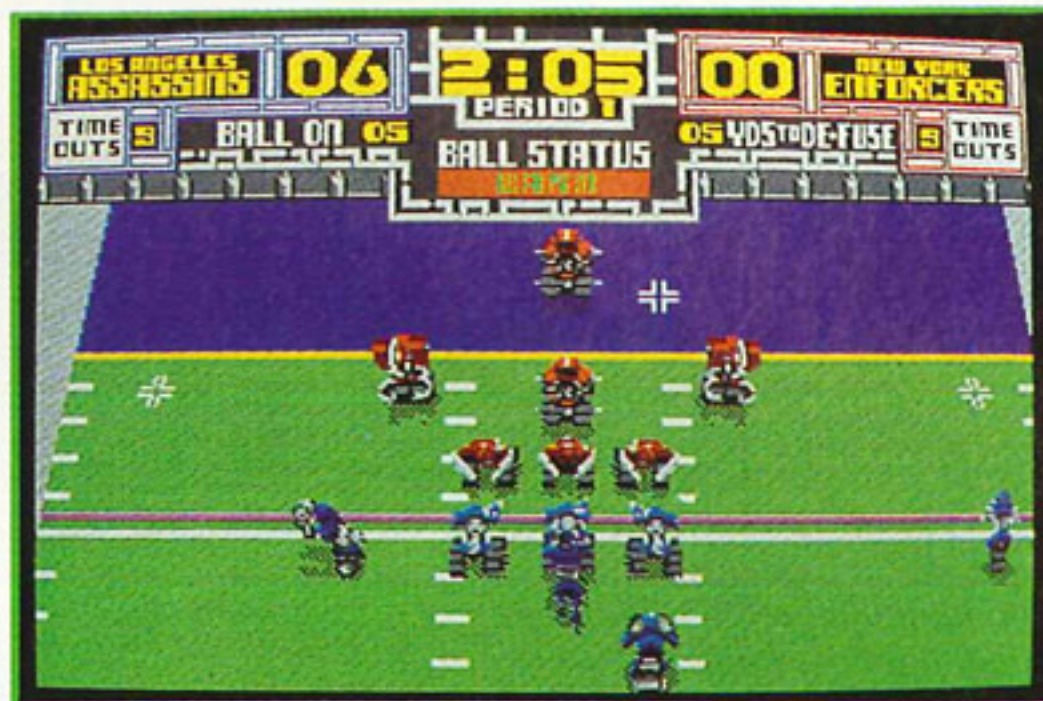
It has been nearly two years since Rainbird launched their vector graphics-style, military simulation, Carrier Command, on the unsuspecting Public. Now, with the demise of Telecomsoft, Ocean have managed to gain the rights to produce the sequel. Battle Command has been programmed in real-time by the original team and is expected to arrive sometime in February.



DOMARK ABOUT TO RUN A S.T.U.N.N.E.R.

Domark are particularly proud to announce their latest coin-op conversion, S.T.U.N. Runner. Set in the 21st Century, you must guide the billion-dollar racing vehicle through a myriad of obstacle-ridden twisting tunnels. S.T.U.N. Runner is a game to test the strongest of nerves as you career along the tunnels at up to speeds of 900mph! Armed to the teeth with powerful lasers you have the opportunity to blast the ever increasing numbers of meanies which try and put an end to your mission. S.T.U.N. Runner features stunning polygon-generated 3D graphics and the sense of speed is amazing. As of yet, no programmer has been commissioned to write the conversion, but Jurgen Friedrich, the man behind Domark's Hard Drivin', looks a likely contender. Watch out for S.T.U.N. Runner towards the middle of the year but, in the meantime, check it out in your local arcades, it's stunning!

Meanwhile, the next game to appear on the Tengen label will be Cyberball. The game is billed as American Football at its most violent. You must choose your team - how's about the Los Angeles Assassins or the New York Enforcers? - and then proceed to pound the opposition into the ground. During the game you may call time-outs and



Metallic mayhem rules supreme in Cyberball. Luckily, you have the chance to call a time-out in order to repair or replace your team members.



The game features different robots for different positions. Here you can see that the Quarterback is a huge fellow, while the running back is designed purely for speed.

replacements for weak and damaged players. Instead of human players your team consists of computer-controlled robots. Cyberball features all the skills currently used in the world of American Football,

plus a whole lot more as you attempt to outclass, outsmart and outmanoeuvre your opponents. Watch out for Cyberball during the middle of January, priced £19.99

TELLING US A LEGEND

Everyone must know the story: the evil Gessler placed his hat on a pole in the middle of the city. Everyone who passed by had to doff their hat in respect, and anyone caught not doing so would be thrown into jail and left to rot. Well, it just so happened that a certain Master Tell decided to neglect the orders of Gessler and walk by without bowing. Having been thrown into the city prison, the young fellow failed to return home to his father, who soon found out what had happened. You must become the

legendary William Tell. Your mission: to avenge your son's wrongful imprisonment and rescue him. The game sees you battling against Gessler's evil Black Knights both in the woods and in their leader's foreboding castle. Using nothing more than your

incredible skill with a crossbow and your strong leadership qualities, can you rescue your son, or will he rot in jail for ever. The Legend of William Tell will cost £19.95 and should be available any day now. Watch out for our full review in next month's fun-filled issue.



The people's hero, William Tell, meets up with Gessler's elite troop, the Black Knights.



With his bow loaded, William endeavours to storm the castle. Despite taking the guards unawares he looks to have a large task ahead of him.

THE DEEPEST GAME EVER...

Aquanaut

The company that produced "The Kristal" bring you an inter-active arcade adventure written in the spirit of 1940's cinema heroes, taking place deep under The Ocean in a maze of underwater caverns and then in the Fabled City of Atlantis. Surmount the perils of the deep with a clever strategy and slick joystick control... the underwater world could be yours.

SWIM 20 miles underwater

BATTLE really nasty creatures

FIND The Lost City of Atlantis

AVOID Mutant Sharks,

SMASH The Ramanishi **SHOOT** your way to Victory **SAVE** The World.



Screen shots from various systems.



Mermaid in Britain

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Swordfish and Jellyfish

HUNT for hidden clues

ARC SOFTWARE NEWS

Until now, Atari have been servicing us with some of their oldy but goldy games from the early arcade and eight-bit days. But now, design houses such as the Bootle-based, Frames, are under the umbrella label, ARC. Amongst a wide variety of games are two very different slants on the war-gaming theme, Prince and Borodino which are already on general release. Prince was heralded as a highly original and immensely playable wargame,

with as much emphasis on individual skirmishes as full-scale battle strategy. Borodino, however, is a more serious simulation of traditional wargaming. Now, using the Battlescapes from Borodino, ARC transport us from the battlefields of Flanders to the midst of the Armada. Armada captures the five days of the attempted invasion by the Spanish fleet, featuring full battlescapes and historically and geographically accurate

laminated maps with write on/off pen. The system is faster than Borodino and there's a better communication system.

In astounding contrast to historic battlegrounds, Starbreaker, from Frames, is an out-and-out arcade game. The Galactic corporation are offering massive rewards for anyone who can clear planets of their inhabitants in readiness for communisation. Many of the planets have two levels - above ground is a fast-action, Defender-style gameplay, but beneath the planet surface, in tunnels and rooms, you must log into computers and undermine the inhabiting race's system. We hope to review Starbreaker in the near future.

Meanwhile, Enterprise offers more cerebral entertainment for the space adventurous. Mankind's origins have been lost in his migration across the many star systems and one of the most populated planets is Solar III which is suffering from failure from the thin layer of ozone. Your task is to locate six elements which bind the ozone layer and bring them back to Solar III. The game boasts some 100 solar systems and 250 planets with fractal graphics on the planets and over 17 different commands from the cockpit.

Billed as 'an arcade phenomenon', Hellraider offers simultaneous two-player action in which you control a mothership and one of the orbital vessels which must protect her from the marauders. Two players can participate, one controlling the mothership, the other the orbital.

Superleague Soccer boasts greater match control and a greater variety of individual player attributes. The Database holds info on 400 individual players.

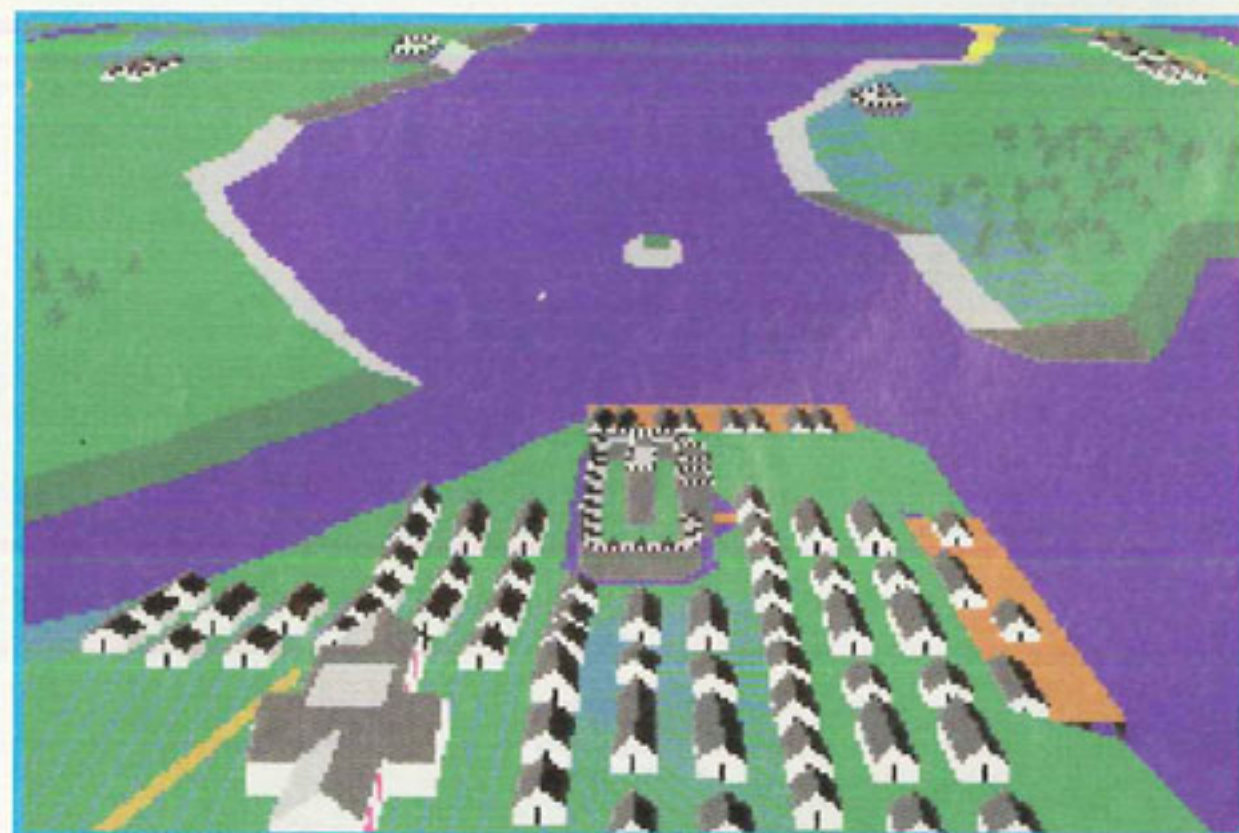


SUPERLEAGUE SOCCER

Soccer management has got to be the most surprisingly successful genre of computer entertainment. In the tradition of Football Manager and its ilk Super League Soccer deals with team management and game strategy as well as the legal and financial wrangling associated with the buying and selling of players.

You can choose to concentrate on the F.A. Cup, the League Cup or turn your attentions to Europe. In the market stakes, you can access information on any of 400 players which helps when negotiating contracts. Also, in a match situation, the game boasts greater match control and more attributes per player - something which has been noticeably lacking in the past. Available on the Impressions's Plato label, Superleague Soccer will cost £19.99 and should be available in all leading software stores, now!

In Starbreaker, you clean up the planet in preparation for comunization - a typical blast and be damned alien-waster.



Using the battlescapes from Bordino, Arc place us in the midst of the invading Armada fleet. They promise a faster system and greater communications than were present in Borodino.

GAMES GALORE

Mandarin Software, the creators of the highly acclaimed STOS games creator, recently held a competition to see just how high the standard of home-grown games was. The results of their findings can be found on Games Galore, a pack containing no less than four great games. Skate Tribe puts you in the sneakers of a streetwise kid whose main objective is to ride his skateboard over a large obstacle course. Along the way you'll come across pot-holes, bollards and the alike. Skystrike, meanwhile, sees you in the seat of a World War

II fighter plane. You are given a number of missions from intercepting enemy aircraft to bombing buildings and sinking battleships. The third title, Yamo is set way into the future. You can choose whether to control a Bomber, Fighter or a Walker as you put paid to an invading force's deadly plans. The game is not only pure arcade action, players will also have to exercise their strategic know-how in order to survive. The last game in the pack, Mouthtrap is a fun arcade-style game featuring you as a large, tooth-filled mouth with an insatiable appetite. As you bounce around the screen you

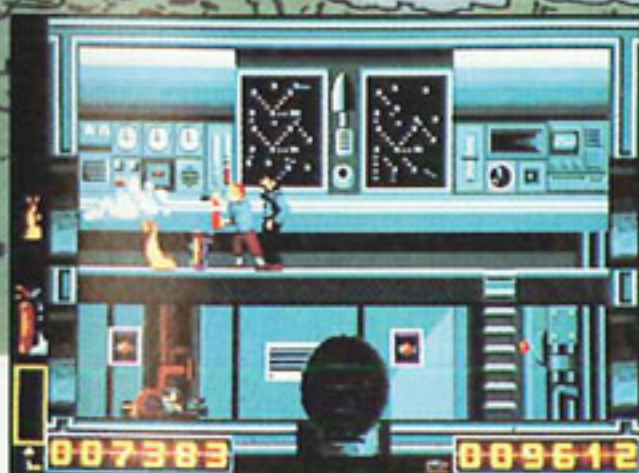
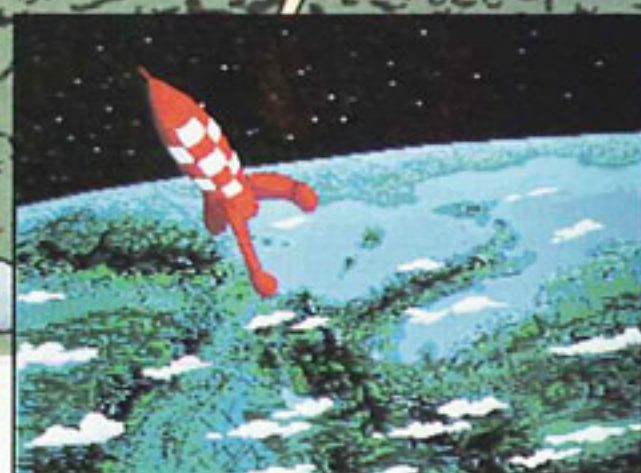
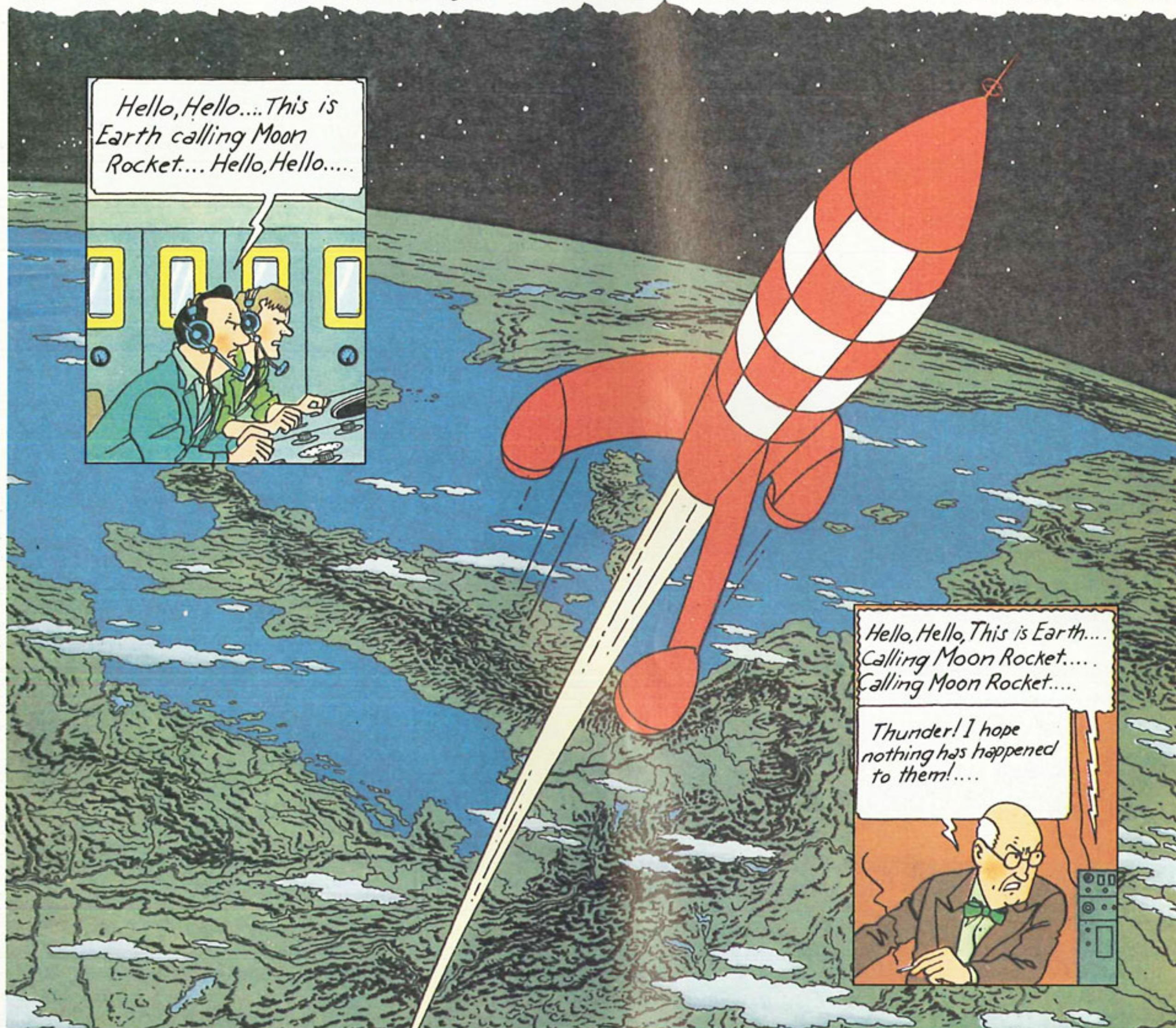
must attempt to chop away at all the goodies in your path. However, throughout the levels lie various nasties all intent on putting an end to your ravenous gluttony.



Get streetwise in Skate Tribe which ain't half good for STOS game

Games Galore comes complete with a useful accessory for all serious STOS programmers, namely, the STOS Squasher. This handy little program allows writers to compress their games by up to 60%! Available from Mandarin, Games Galore costs £24.99.

TINTIN ON THE MOON



"Hello control station! Here is the moon rocket. Tintin speaking. I have just regained consciousness. Everything seems OK, we are now taking over the controls of the rocket." Aboard the rocket, you will relive with Tintin and his friends the most exciting adventure the world has ever known. The first trip to the Moon!

Will you succeed in piloting the red and white rocket through space and achieve a flawless landing? Will you capture Colonel Boris, the traitor, who wants to make the expedition fail? Will you be able to find the extinguishers to put out the fires, even while floating in zero-gravity (which isn't everybody's idea of fun)? Will you succeed in finding and disarming the bombs and freeing your companions in order to get out of the rocket to make the first step on the Moon? You will discover all this by playing "TINTIN ON THE MOON", the first computer game based on the comic books by Hergé...

Before Armstrong there was Tintin and... may be you!



Available on : **AMIGA, AMSTRAD, ATARI ST, SPECTRUM, C64, IBM PC.**

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INTERCEPTOR SMASH 16

The sixteen-bit budget market really seems to be taking off. With companies such as U.S. Gold, Mastertronic, and Electronic Arts already producing top quality, pocket-money-priced software, the Aldermaston-based software group, Interceptor, are about to join the fold. With Mastertronic having taken the plunge into the £4.99 price range, Interceptor are about to follow suit. At present there are seven ST titles on offer.

Hollywood Poker is yet another classic card game that, like many before it, features various scantily-clad young women who slowly divest themselves of clothing as you win. Joe Blade sees you as a crack-commando whose mission is to infiltrate an enemy base and help rescue a number of hostages. Joe Blade II sees you assuming the role of the aforementioned hero after he

Joe Blade II, a commando style game with a difference - it scrolls horizontally. Much of the game is picking up objects to spring hostages but their's plenty of Nazis to waste along the way.



War Machine is classic shoot'em-up action against swarms of bio-mechanical blood-suckers - sounds glorious!

has left the army. Can you guide Joe through the alleys and back streets? Extensor is a 3D race-style game in the mould of the cars from Tron.

As you race along the grid your vehicle leaves a coloured wall behind it. Can you make your opponent crash into your wake or will you fall foul of his computer-controlled driving? Eagles Nest is a game in the style of Atari's classic coin-op, Gauntlet. This time, however, instead of making your way through dark dungeons, you have to penetrate a Nazi fortress, lay numerous explosive charges and escape before the whole place blows up! War Machine is a classic shoot'em-up in which you must take on the might of swarms of bio-mechanoid blood suckers, evil techno-military adversaries

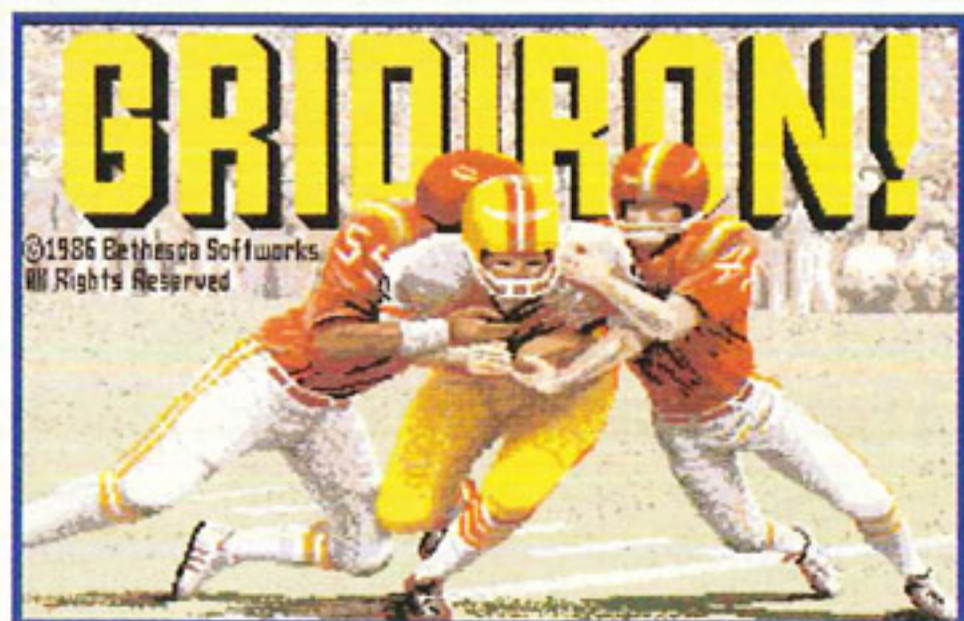
and armour-stripping acid attackers. Finally, there is Gladiators which is unfortunately only available on a double-sided disk. The game sees you playing the role of Sparticus, a poor Roman gladiator. As you progress through the game you must defeat the Emperor's finest warriors in order to escape. Armed merely with a sword and a spear, and with only a shield and net to protect you, can you escape the terrors of the amphitheatre?

All of the games will be available from the beginning of December and, as mentioned, it will cost £4.99.

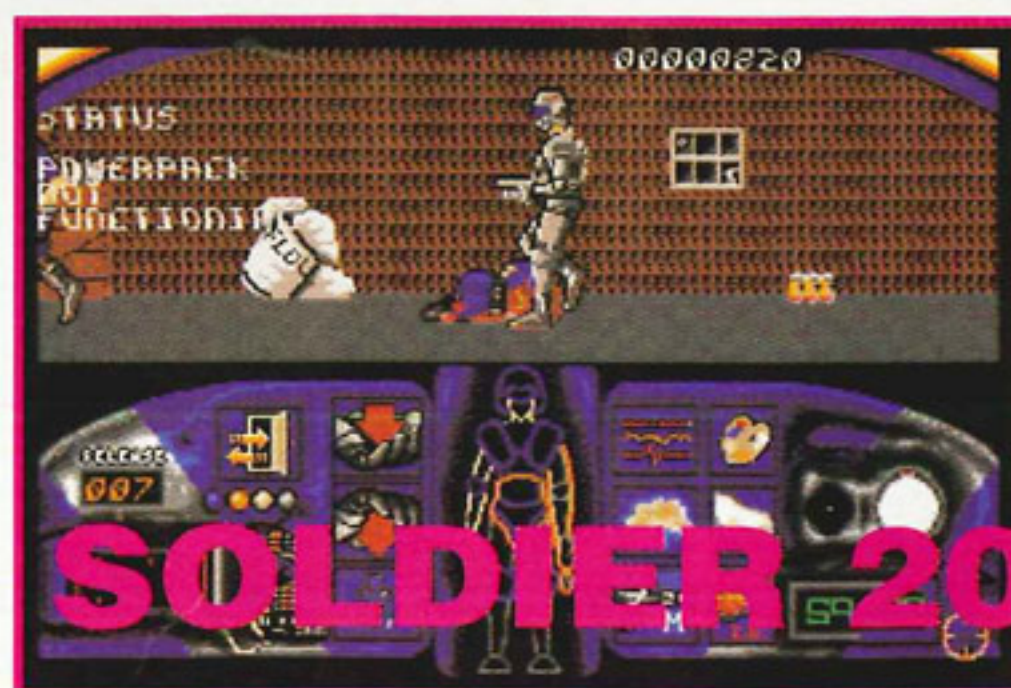
TOUCHDOWN FOR BETHESDA

It's fourth and goal on the two with ten seconds left in the game, for little-known software developers, Bethesda. I've never really understood this weird and wonderful American game but with Gridiron on the way I'm sure going to start learning. What with Wayne Gretsky's Ice Hockey and now Gridiron, it looks like Bethesda are aiming to be the purveyors of sports simulations from Stateside. There has been a growing scrimmage of U.S.

football simulations just recently, but Gridiron concentrates more on strategic team play and management, rather than physical arcade gameplay. There's five levels of play, ranging from practice to pro, and a knowledge of the game and accompanying vernacular is a bonus as this is technical stuff. American Football fans should start watching their software shelves for the arrival of Gridiron. The game will cost £24.95..



Gridiron demonstrates that success in American football is seventy percent strategy and thirty percent brute strength



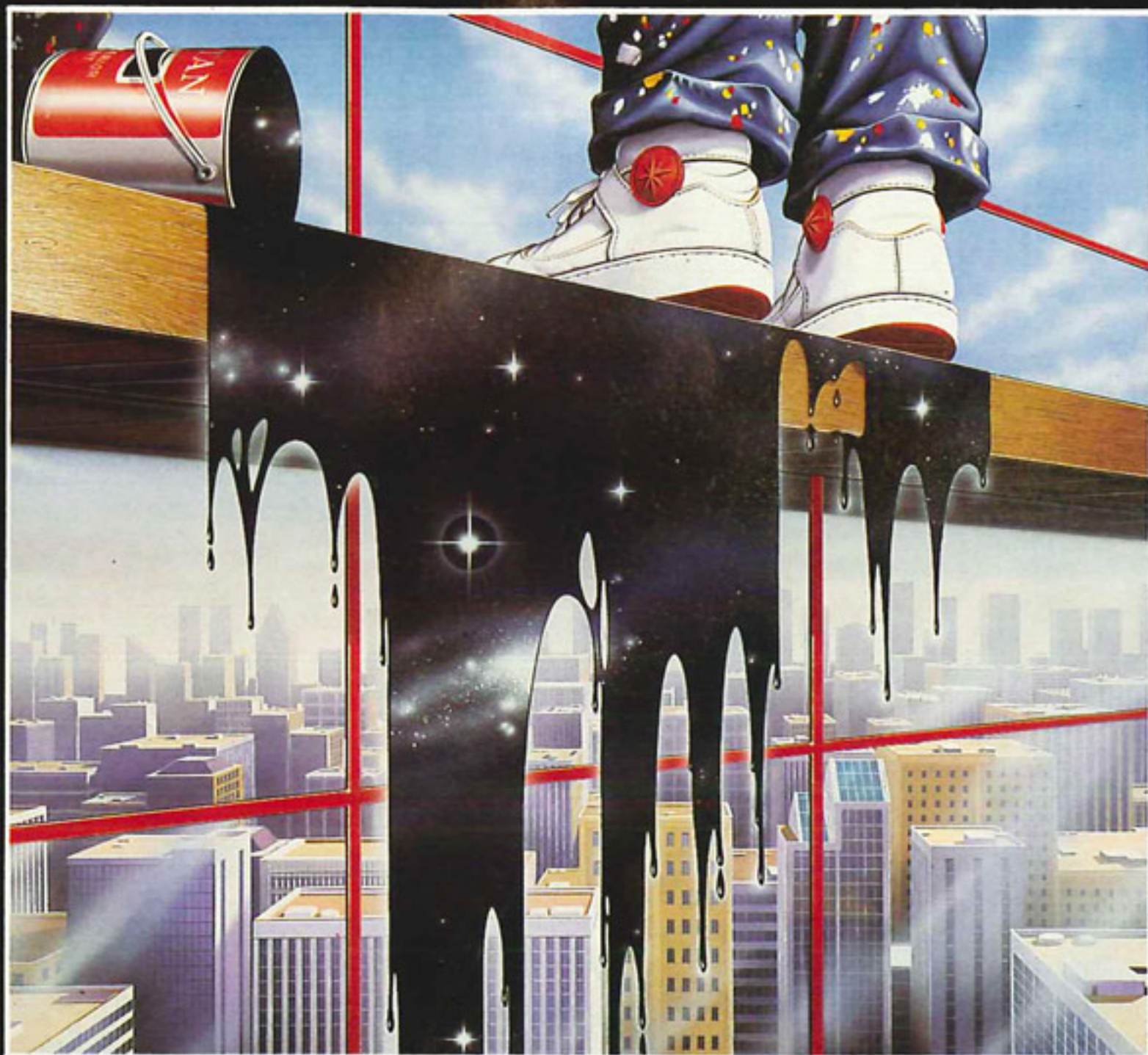
Soldier 2000 is a combination of 2D and 3D playfields with multi-level parallax scrolling - WOW!

"Any time, any place, any war...", that's your motto and, as a crack fighting troop, it's up to you to sort out the various troubles in the universe. But, be warned, this is no "Get in there and sort'em out game!". Oh no, as Soldier 2000 you must plan your strategy, choose which weapons from your immense arsenal you need and, finally, enter the war-zone. Soldier 2000 features five separate mission scenarios, each increasing in complexity. Graphically, the game boasts

both 2D and 3D playfields and multi-level parallax scrolling, and this action sees you swapping between your various weapons and generally giving the enemy hell. As mentioned, there is a slight strategic bent to the game, and the success of your mission depends on whether you choose a 'softly-softly' approach or go in guns blazing. Whatever method you choose, you'll be able to see how the game fares when we review it next month.

FUTURE WARS

TIME TRAVELLERS



"Brilliant" 90%
ZERO Magazine

"Set to become a timeless classic" 90%
THE ONE Magazine

"An excellent icon driven adventure ... well worth buying" 82%
AMIGA ACTION Magazine

"One hell of a game" 87% ST FORMAT GOLD AWARD
ST FORMAT Magazine

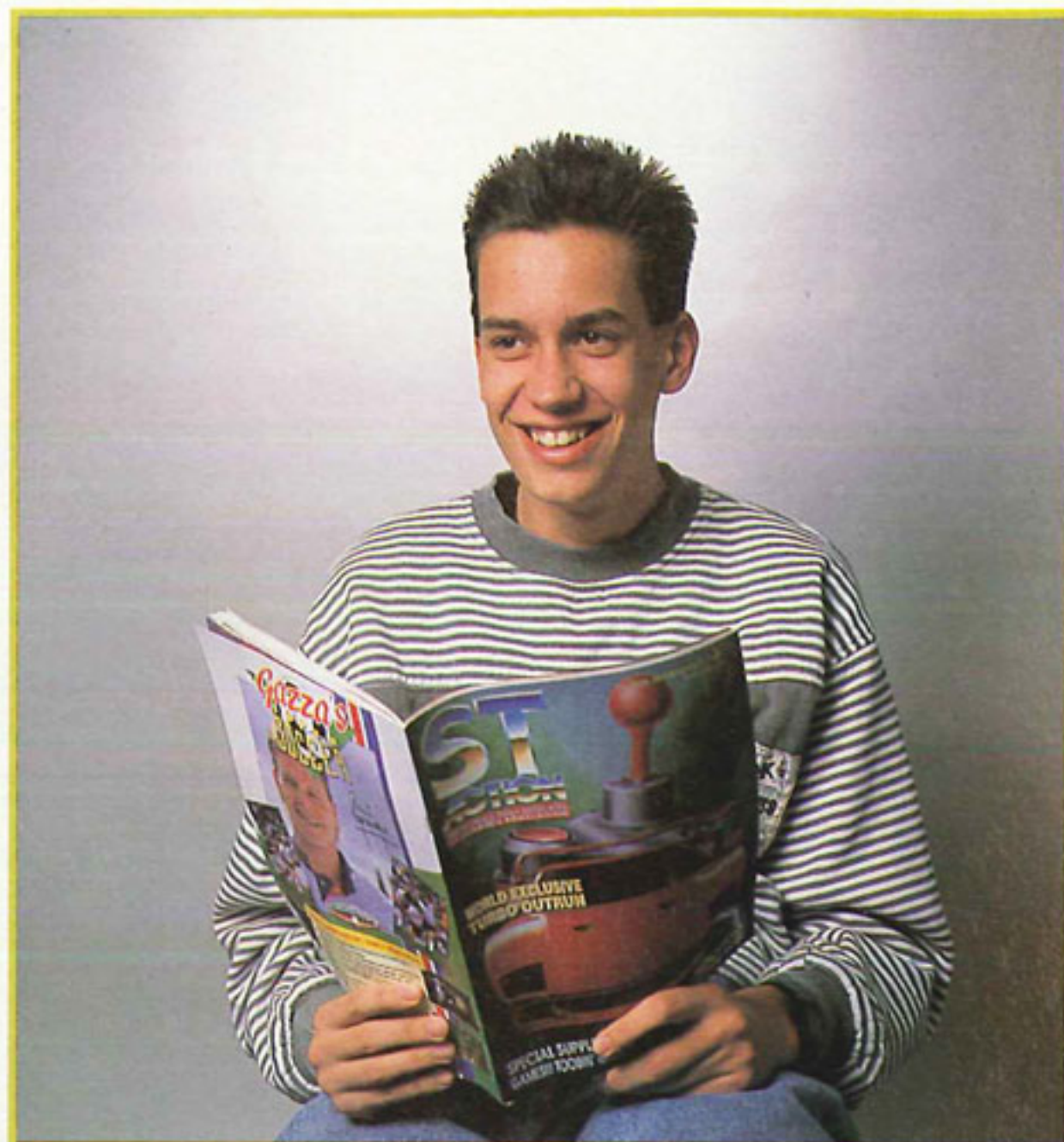
"Go out and get this" 83% STA I AWARD
ST ACTION Magazine

"Nice one" 93%
AMIGA COMPUTING EXCELLENCE AWARD
AMIGA COMPUTING Magazine



CINÉMATIQUE™: A Brand New Standard in Computer Games

Alex 'always in early' Simmons, seen here reading his favourite monthly mag.

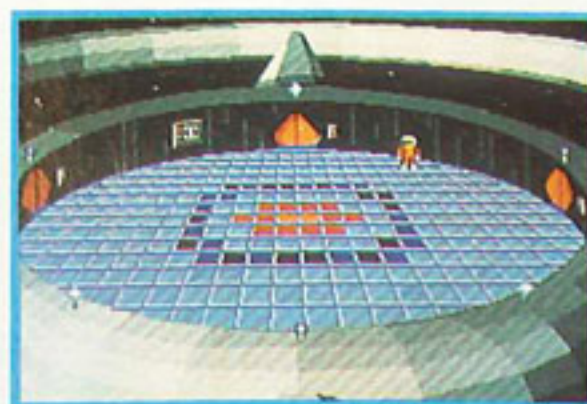


NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Introducing a new member of the ST Action team, Alex Simmons. Hailing from the sunny seaside town of Selsey, Alex is a local lad who's had an ST for just over three years! He names his favourite games as being the Sierra Quests, Falcon and Xenon II. Of course, Alex is a confirmed Dungeon Master Maniac. So, while he's not playing video games, what else

does young Alex like? Hmm, well he certainly can't be classed as quiet. Alex enjoys listening to the likes of Guns'n'Roses! During his days off (he won't be getting many of them any more! Ed.), Alex likes to shoot people! Well, not actually kill them, he's a member of the Dark Avengers - a crack paintballing team.

As Commander of the Starflight, your task is to boldly go where no man has been before and then talk a while.



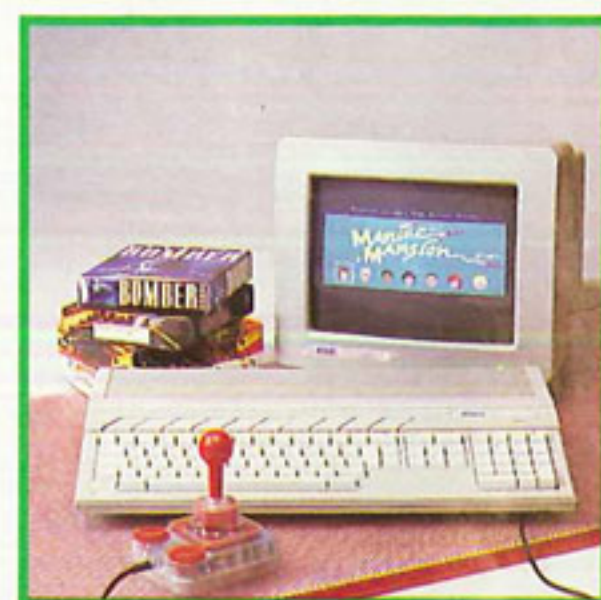
ELECTRONIC ARTS' STARFLIGHT

Langley-based software giants, Electronic Arts, are planning to release their interstellar game, Starflight, sometime in January, costing £24.99. Players will be able to handpick a crew of up to six members from five weird alien races. Having chosen your crew and kitted out your ship you'll be able to blast off into the dark and distant unknown. Using a detailed starmap, your journey will take you to ice-laden wastes, lava-encrusted moons and huge aquatic worlds.

Although your ship is protected by numerous shields and lasers, you'll doubtlessly encounter hostile alien races who are better prepared for battle than yourself. Communication is the key to avoiding nasty flare-ups and, as Commander of the ship, you'll be called upon to make all the important diplomatic speeches.

STE IN THE SHOPS, NOW!

Those awfully nice people at Atari have decided to give a fortunate few a very happy Christmas this year. The first batch of the much talked about STE machines was shipped out to dealers during the middle of November. It seems that the company's Christmas campaign has been so successful that there is a shortage of 520's. Lucky buyers will find that many standard 1040ST boxes will contain the new machines. There shouldn't be any price rise either as the STE will cost £499. The 520STE went on display at the Comdex show in Chicago, but is unlikely to appear on British ground before the end of January.



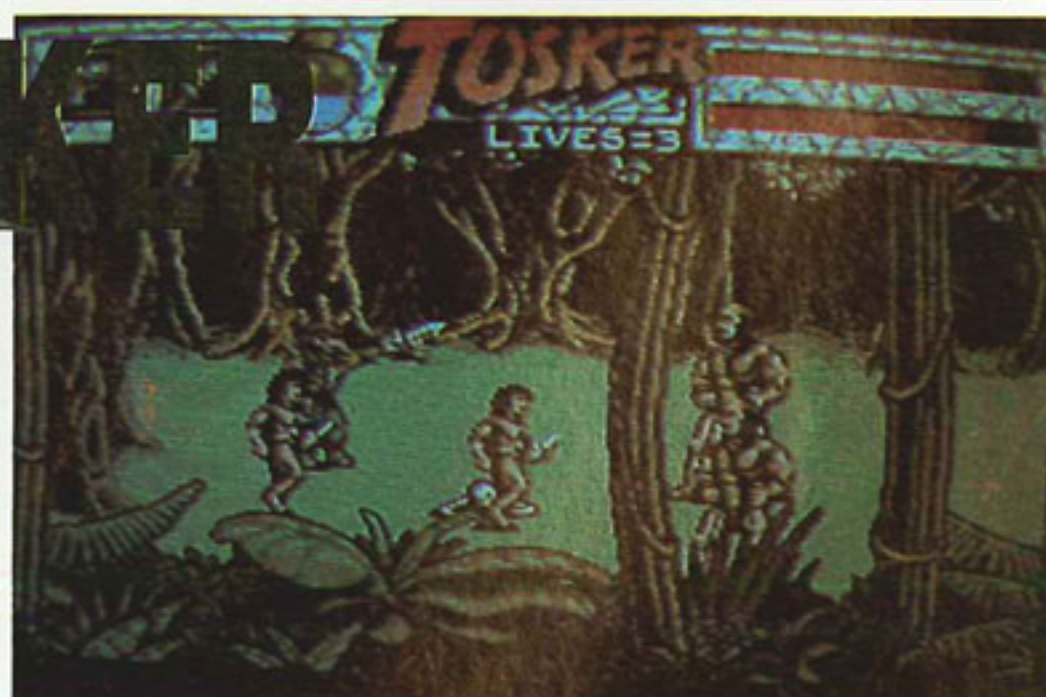
The much-talked about Atari STE has finally made its way into high-street stores. Would-be 1040ST buyers could be getting the first machines all for £499

THE MYTH OF TUSKER

Your father was always the adventurous sort, but when he didn't return from his last expedition you began to suspect something was wrong, very wrong. The old man had gone in search of the much fabled, but never found, elephants' graveyard. Now, with his failure to return, you have decided to follow in his footsteps. Will you discover the elephants' graveyard? Will you find out what fate befell your father? One thing's for certain, your journey will be filled with

danger. Along the way you'll come into contact with restless nomads, angry natives and hungry cannibals. Not to mention lecherous animal life, somewhat unhappy witch doctors, and long-forgotten, but nevertheless, bloodthirsty dinosaurs. System 3's Tusker follows the same 3D theme that their best-selling Last Ninja games do and is bound to be a huge success. Watch out for the intrepid explorer, he should appear sometime around January, priced £24.95

The local natives seem to be a little unhappy at your sudden appearance: maybe you should avoid them next time.



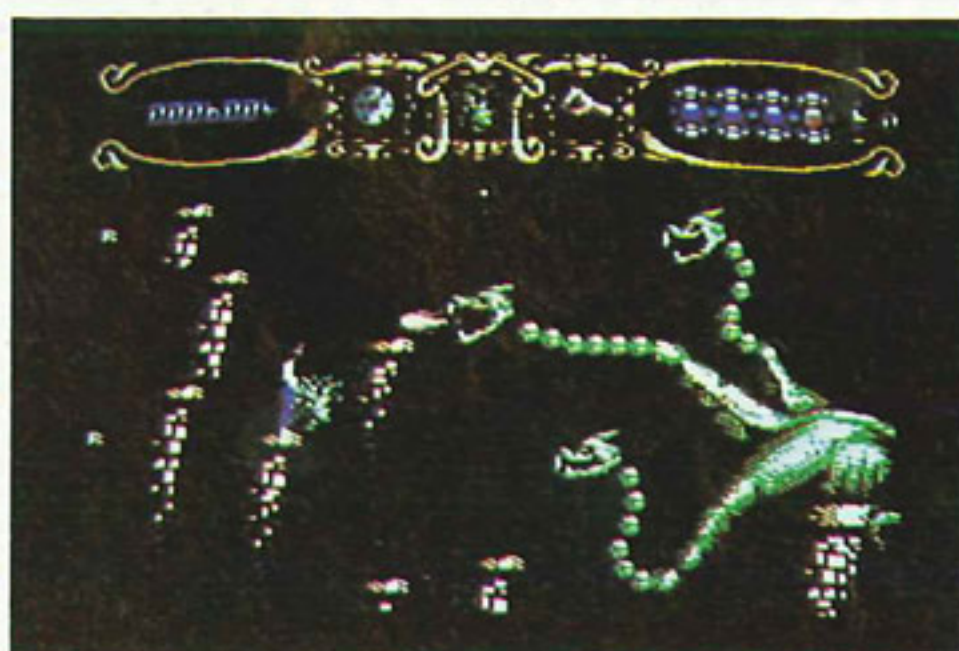
Meanwhile, Myth is platform-style game in which you have been called by the gods to travel back in time in order to set the course of history straight. It appears that one of the lesser-known gods, Dameron, has decided to run riot through time by fiddling with the very controls that regulate life, the universe and just about everything.

Your mission takes place over four sprawling levels, each full of teetering platforms and deadly mythical creatures, such as the fearsome Hydra and the snake-haired Medusa. Your heroic quest starts in Rome and leads you to Egypt, Greece and

even the Nordic Realm of the Vikings. Each of the four levels has its own 'look', keeping in tone with the particular time zone you find yourself in. The end of each level is guarded by a huge monster who requires several well-aimed hits in order to kill him.

The game is being written by Laurie Sinnet and Martin Wheeler, Martin having previously been involved in System 3's previous game, Dominator. Myth is rapidly nearing completion and should appear in the shops sometime in January. Once again, the game will carry the price tag of £24.99.

As if jumping between the perilous platforms weren't enough, you've also got to contend with a three-headed, fire-breathing Hydra!



In 1989 the Wall cracked... ...in 1948 a nation cracked...

As a nation is torn apart in one of the greatest political tragedies in modern history, this is only but a backdrop for a far more sinister event that has taken place. An atomic bomb is found missing from a British base and is believed to be headed to the Soviet forces. As a lone American agent, you must scour the city questioning the military police and occupying forces and interrogating the shadowy figures of the underworld, in your mission to recover the bomb before the Cold War takes a much more dramatic twist.

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YOU ARE ENTERING THE
SOVIET ZONE

Achtung!
Sie verlassen
nicht
West-Berlin
Sonst

EAST vs WEST BERLIN 1948

East vs. West

BERLIN

Screen shots from Amiga version.



Rainbow Arts

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production
for Rainbow
Arts

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THE LETTERS DESK

Are ST users getting value for money?
Are you satisfied with the standard of software?
Do you know how to get rid of that annoying virus?
How do you scroll screens in STOS? If you have any thoughts or questions then write to us at: The Letters Desk, ST Action, Latham House, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 2NY.

Xenon Zapped

I was interested by the article about Xenon in the November '89 issue. I completed Xenon long ago without a cheat mode, and personally I thought it wasn't too hard. Mind you, the arcade version of Xenon is even easier, but at least it had a congratulatory message.

I also found that Xenon II - Megablast wasn't too hard and, although it has an end sequence, it isn't very impressive - just a simple graphic sequence. Having been wowed by the graphics of Xenon II, I would have thought it would have a better end sequence - something like Silkworm perhaps. Oh well, at least Xenon II compensates for this by being a great game.

Kevin Wright,
Romford, Essex.

Hello, Kevin. Many people have written in regarding the lack of end sequences in the Bitmap's Xenon games. However, I do agree that the action alone is tremendous.

I'd Just Like To Say a Few Words.

After reading many issues of your excellent magazine (since issue 10!), I thought it was time for me to voice my opinions and views.

Magazine Comments - Excellent, but PLEASE do another joystick megatest. Also, I don't agree with your apparent "policy" of giving sequels bad scores because of their similarity to their predecessors. I would also like to see some sort of Advert index.

Games - I judge a game by its quality, not whether it's a conversion or not. I should mention that the supposed "brilliant" version of Operation Wolf on one disk is a con - it only contains three levels (I have completed them all)! Finally, I do think difficult games give more value for money.

Piracy - This is a difficult subject and many of my views for and against the subject have already been expressed by other readers.

The ST Action Team - I think you have an excellent team. Jason Spiller is a great reporter on software companies. Nick Clarkson is the best computer magazine

editor ever. Steve Kennedy and Andy Mitchell are great adventure reviewers. Steve Merrett is a good tipster and an ace reviewer.

Lastly, please, please, please give me some tips for Firebird's Elite as I find this ace game very hard.

Robert Cass,
North London.

Hello, Robert, and thank you for your words of wisdom. Here, for your enjoyment, are some answers.

Magazine Comments - Ok, yes, we will do another joystick megatest, when I eventually have the time. We don't have a policy of giving sequels lower marks just because they are similar to their forefathers.

Games - We, too, judge games fairly be they conversions or highly original titles. Hard games do offer a real challenge but only if you persevere with them.

Piracy - enough said already.

The ST Action Team - Ah, praise at last! We've all heard the Jason, Mitch Steve are great comments. But at long last someone has seen fit to praise the person who is really behind this wonderful read.

Finally, we printed several cheats in last month's edition of giving the game away and, in case you missed it, there was also a whole page dedicated to this mega-space game in issue 9.

Don't Buy Them

I'm writing to complain about other people's objections to there being both too much violence and sexual content in computer games. If these people don't want to play such games then they should take my advice, "Don't buy them!". Right, I don't expect to see any more ridiculous letters.

P.S. I found Sierra On-Line's Leisure Suit Larry amusing and fun. I can't understand people who get offended by it.

Clive Doughty,
Southborough, Kent.

PC Show Comments

Being a PC Show veteran (having been to the previous four shows), I looked forward to the excitement and noise of the biggest

computer show of the year.

As there is every year, there was the expected assembly of glossy stands and arcade machines publicizing the latest games from the biggest games in the industry. As there is every year, there were the usual excuses as to why their newest titles weren't quite completed in time. In fact, there was virtually nothing in the software line released at the show.

The hardware side wasn't much better either. The Konix console looked good, the Atari officials looked embarrassed and the Nintendo stand was just looked for, never found. But again, nothing new was released at the show. Still, it was good, clean fun. Plenty of paper hats and posters were had by all.

What impressed me then? Well, *Hard Drivin'* looked exceptional on the ST, *Shadow of the Beast* looked stunning on the Amiga, and Jeff Minter looked decidedly unwell on a combination of strong coffee and cigarettes, although his light synthesizer was attracting the attention of many ST owners. The Ordnance Survey Award for leading the industry in the right direction must go to Virgin/Mastertronic. They have decided to release sixteen-bit software at £4.99. Let's hope that the quality is as good as it was back in 1984, when Mastertronic did the same thing for the eight-bit machines (anyone remember Finders Keepers?).

So, is the PC Show worth attending? Not if you live near Aberdeen - it'll cost you around £50 just to get to King's Cross station. It's not that good, but if you're in the vicinity it's well worth a visit - if only for the cheap software, hardware and floppyware (for example, a new STFM for under £200 or 50 blank disks for £22). I, for one, will certainly be at Earl's Court at the same time next year, hoping for a few bargains, some new software, and that Timmy Mallett is nowhere in sight or earshot.

Nigel Palmer,
Norwich, Norfolk.

Thanks for your comments, Nigel. It seems that you spent quite some time savouring the sights and sounds of the show. Like you, we too enjoyed the show and, just to make you jealous, we also got to visit all the plush VIP suites situated high in the lofty bowers of the building. Now I don't think you'll be going to the PC Show next year as EMAP are taking it over and they'll probably call it something different. Finally, what do you mean, you'll be hoping that Timmy Mallett is nowhere within sight or earshot? I'll have you know that Sir Timmy is one of our personal, all-time heroes.

Pointless Packaging

I must agree with Justin Yarrer's letter in ST Action issue 19, about the packaging of computer games. When prices for top

games are so inflated, only a rich dimbo would fork out upwards of twenty spondoolies for a piece of software on the basis of it having a pretty box. The more normal games-playing majority will be tempted by either playing the game in a shop or reading a good review of it, the packaging will have nothing to do with the purchase. Speaking as someone with a close contact with the printing/marketing business, I know that the production of pretty, glossy boxes and 'mood-setting' novellas etc. is certainly not a cheap affair - no matter how cheap the production run is. I, too, keep all my games disks in a storage box, the packaging rests quietly on the litter bin. Unlike the Editor, I don't feel a bookshelf full of glossy cardboard boxes is that great a statement in interior decor. If games were sold in plain brown envelopes and cost a few quid less, they'd sell a lot better, as long as the actual software wasn't compromised. Actually, there are a few titles around now that ought to be sold in plain brown envelopes, but that's another matter entirely!

I do agree, however, that an eye-catching package can draw the attention of a browsing shopper, but would also argue that there must be very few people who can afford to buy games in this manner, especially at today's prices. Unfortunately, the prices are targeted in at the demand the public generates. As long as everyone is resigned to the costs there's no reason why software companies will lower them. I'd like to propose a nationwide consumer strike; everybody out there must go without buying any games for three months, and then we'll see if software houses will start lowering their prices!

Oh, yes, one more point - I feel I must, regrettably, praise your magazine (I hate those sychophantic 'ST Action is brilliant' letters). In terms of games reviews your magazine is by far the best, as it gives three separate opinions from different reviewers, so you get a much better, unbiased idea of whether or not it's worth forking out the beer tokens for a pretty box and all.

Alan Heeley,
Haverhill, Suffolk.

Hello, Alan. Well, thanks for your points, I'm sure there are many others out there that feel the same way. However, I still feel that people who pay the full amount for a game should get more than just a disk. Indeed, the use of novellas, freebies and glossy packaging all contribute to the overall item. I, personally, agree with you that prices of software are rather high. I understood it in the early days when the sixteen-bit market was small and software houses had to make a living from the few copies they sold. But now, with the ST and Amiga user bases being so much larger, I feel they should make a conscious effort to review their pricing algorithms. Finally, thank you for your



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PROFILES

EXPENSES

DATA BANK

kind, but so well-deserved, words of praise.

Elite Address

For some months I had been stuck at Elite's fifth mission. Then, in your June issue I read a letter from John Logan of Glasgow, entitled 'are games play-tested first?', saying that some issues of Elite were bugged. His description of the effects of the bug fitted the point at which I was stuck (once destroyed, the alien space station recurs ever after, thus no progress can be made).

The letter pointed out that by sending the bugged disk to Firebird it would be replaced by a bug-free version. So, I sent a letter to the Firebird address printed on the back of the Elite packaging. It came back with 'not known at this address' written on it. Undeterred, I looked through the packaging and found another address printed on the disk. I sent another letter and, guess what? Yes, 'not known at this address'! Please tell me where I can get a working version.

Kevin Pavey,
Westlea, Swindon.

Right, Kevin, what you may or may not know is that Telecomsoft was sold off some time ago. However, fear not, for simulator kings, Microprose, took over the Firebird name. I suggest you call them on 0666 504326, and explain the problem. I'm sure they'll be only too happy to help.

Fourth Down And Ten

I recently purchased 'TV Sports: Football' for my 520ST and I find it very enjoyable. I wrote to Mirrorsoft concerning some queries I have about the game. However, so far I've received no reply from them so I've decided to write to you.

Why is it so different from the Amiga version? In January 'The One' magazine said that, "the only tangible difference (from the Amiga version) will be the disk swapping". However, I only got one disk when I purchased the game so I guess it has been chopped down to fit onto a single disk. Surely there isn't that much of a difference between the capabilities of the ST and the Amiga? I would be happy if you would clarify the situation; do 1040ST owners get a full game? Even though the words on the box do say "screen shots represent the Amiga version only", surely it is unfair for Mirrorsoft to also say "included... are these TV Sports exclusives: Announcers, cheerleaders, fans in the stands and a half-time show!" and "Includes 'pushbutton statistics' to view the top performers in the league", when I have seen no cheerleaders, no announcers, no fans in the stands, no half-time show and the only 'statistics' my game shows are the team standings and the

scores of the games already played.

Even in your own review in the November '89 issue, Jason Spiller says "the team have really captured the carnival and spectacle of this game, from pom-pom girls to news reports". So, do I have to expand my ST to 1 megabyte to get these features, have I bought some sort of inferior version, or are Mirrorsoft misleading us?

Finally, I would also like to say how much I enjoy reading ST Action, it's bright and humorous but its reviews are sensible; it doesn't give every single game a rating of ninety plus percent - unlike certain other magazines I could mention. Keep up the good work!

D.B. Smith,
Penicuik, Midlothian.

Thank you for your letter, Mr. Smith. Now, down to business. Apparently the ST version of TV Sports: Football was set to contain all the features that the Amiga version boasts. However, due to time, disk space (most ST games have to be produced on single-sided disks so that everyone can enjoy them) and various other factors, these 'cosmetic differences' were left out of the final version. Just to check, I obtained a new copy of the game. As you said it comes on a single disk and the packaging is somewhat misleading.

Cheats!

Okay, the game's up tell us just how you managed to reach the end of level one of Xenon II with three lasers and countless other weapons. What is the elusive cheat-mode, because it's impossible to get that far and have so many weapons.

Christopher Stevens,
Stoke-on-Trent.

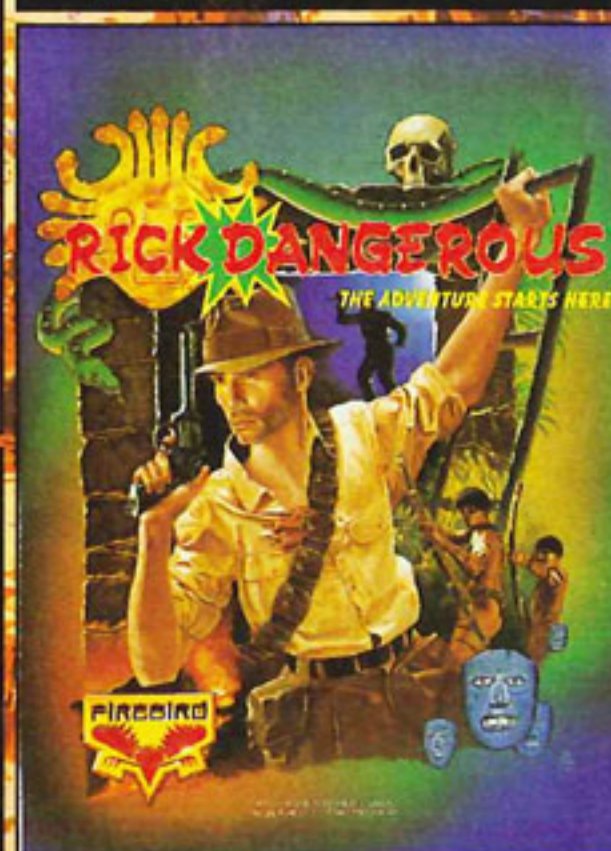
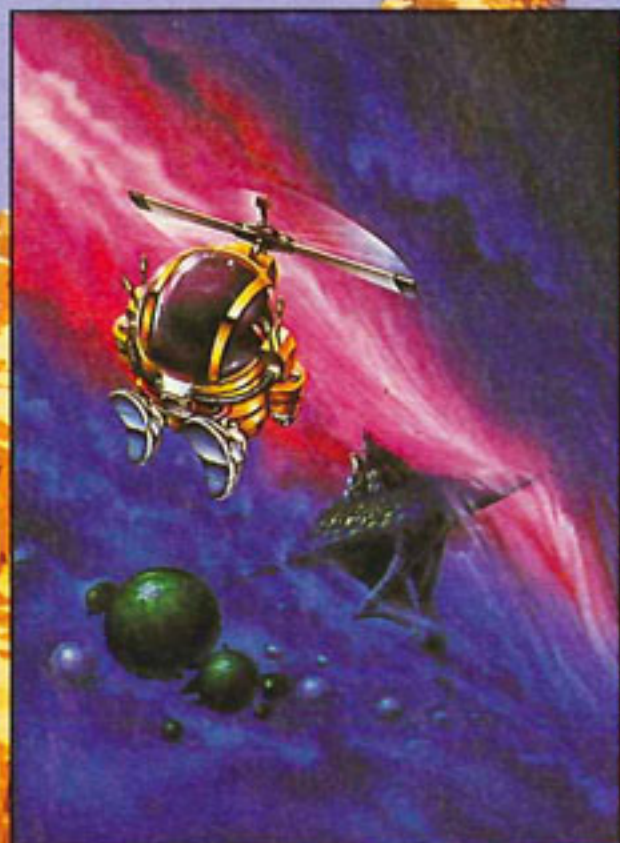
Sorry, Chris, but we didn't have a cheat-mode. Just a version with which you could choose to continue on the same level.

And Finally...

I'm sure you'd all like to congratulate Jason and his wife, Sarah, on the birth of their new baby daughter. Catriona Jade was born on the 5th November and weighed in at a colossal nine pounds!



THE BEST OF ARCADE ACTION

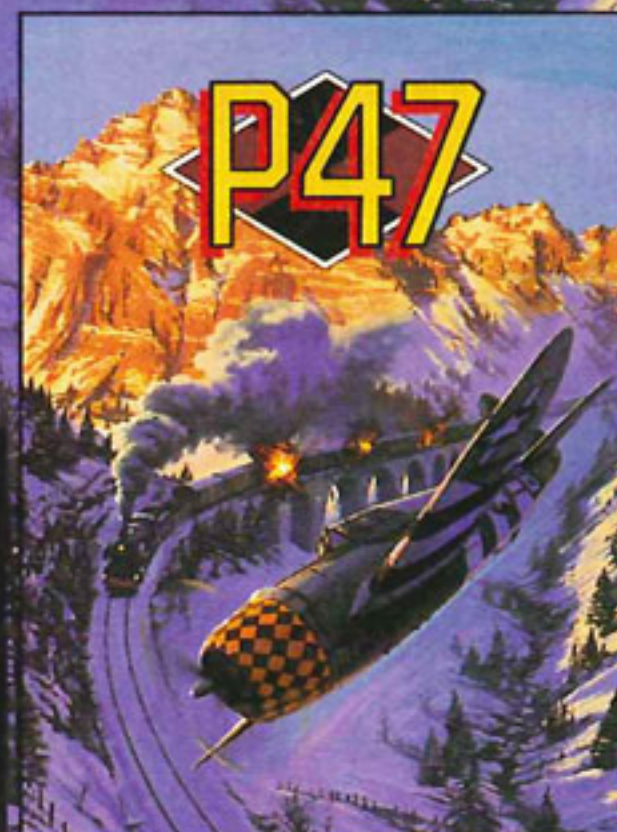


RICK DANGEROUS. Explorer extraordinaire Rick Dangerous dodges traps with guile and defies death with a smile through the perils of foreign adventure. The most exciting funniest, and original platform game in years. "Rick Dangerous is simply a brilliant game & combines humorous graphics & some of the most devious low down game play I've seen in years." C & VG HIT

QUARTZ. You'll need super-human reactions to play Quartz, a challenging 8-way scrolling blast-'em-up, where missiles whizz in every direction. Keep your finger on the trigger and your wits about you to survive 22 levels of mayhem.

Quotation... "incorporates just about every shoot-'em-up concept ever devised - enough to impress just about anybody." The One.

MR HELI. Get your chopper airborne and steer Mr. Heli through mazes laden with danger; earn your money to buy new weapons as the fire-power is upped; clearing your path to unmask 'The Muddy' takes nerve and cunning. Play sharp, steer right, keep up the fight!



P-47. Pilot your World War II Lightning P-47 Thunderbolt dangerously deep behind enemy lines. Blow-away the enemy airforce, blitz ground installations and blast your way to victory in this stunning conversion of the Jaleco coin-op.



MicroProse, Unit 1, Hampton Road Industrial Estate, Tetbury, Glos, GL8 8DA.

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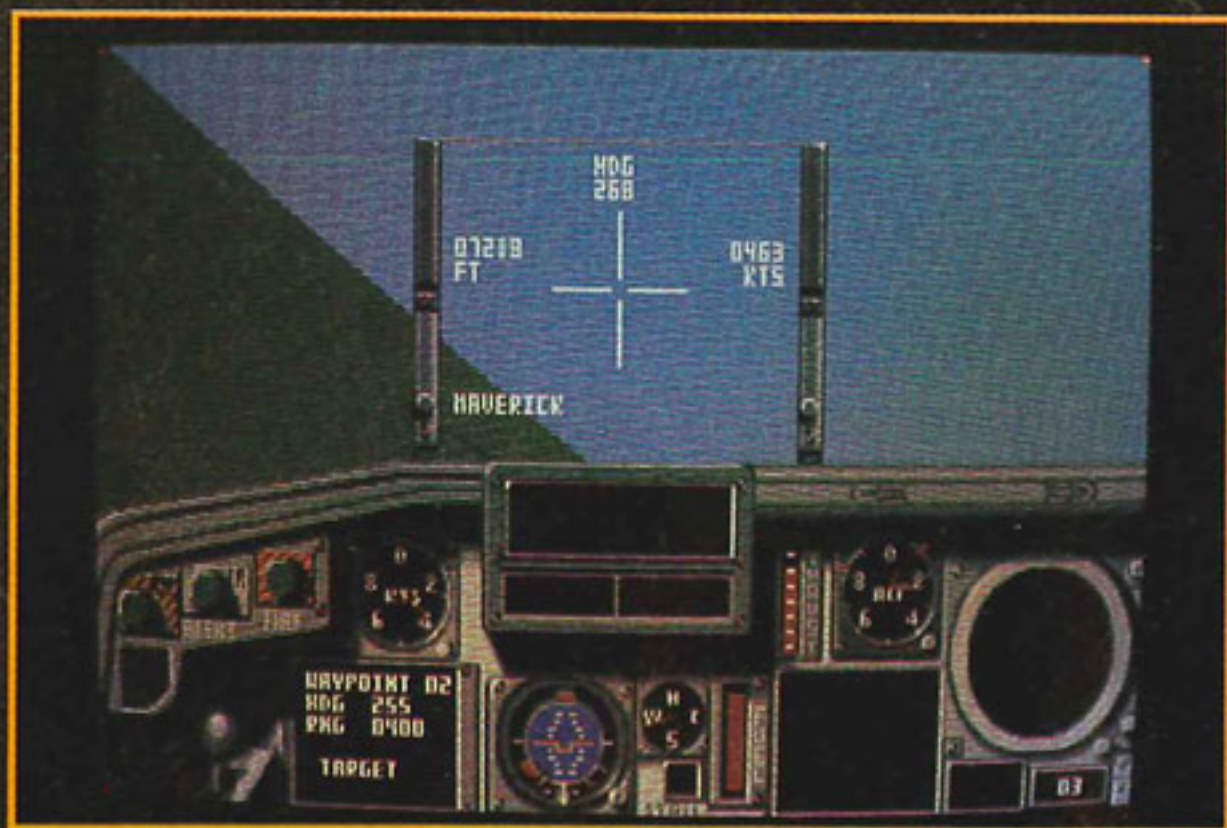
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VECTOR GRAPHICS

Since the Disney movie Tron, game designers have endeavoured to produce computer-generated, 'realistic', 3D worlds. But advances were slow, until the advent of sixteen-bit computing. Our industry communicator, Jason Spiller, talks to leading designers who are currently developing games using 3D, filled Vector-graphics.

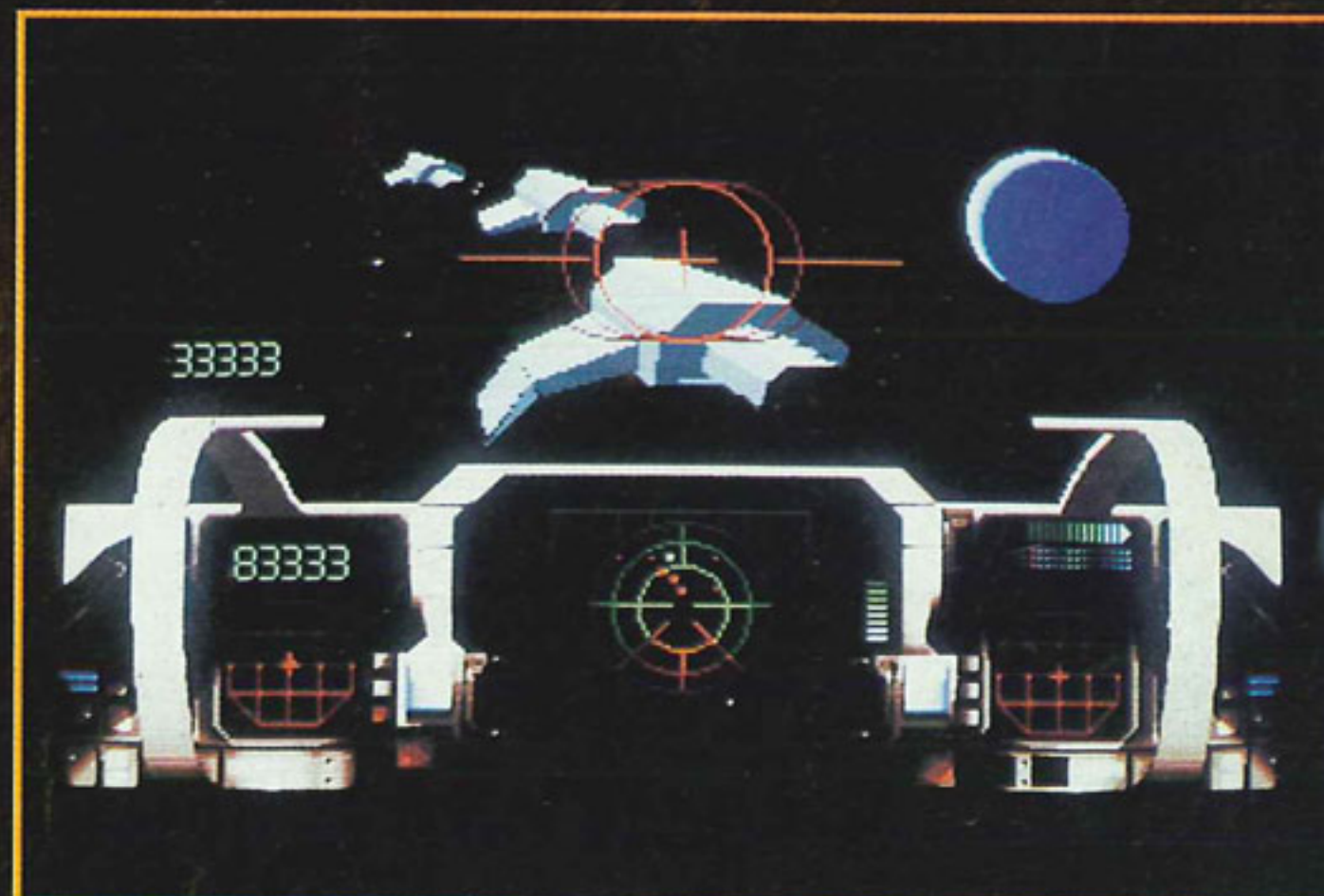
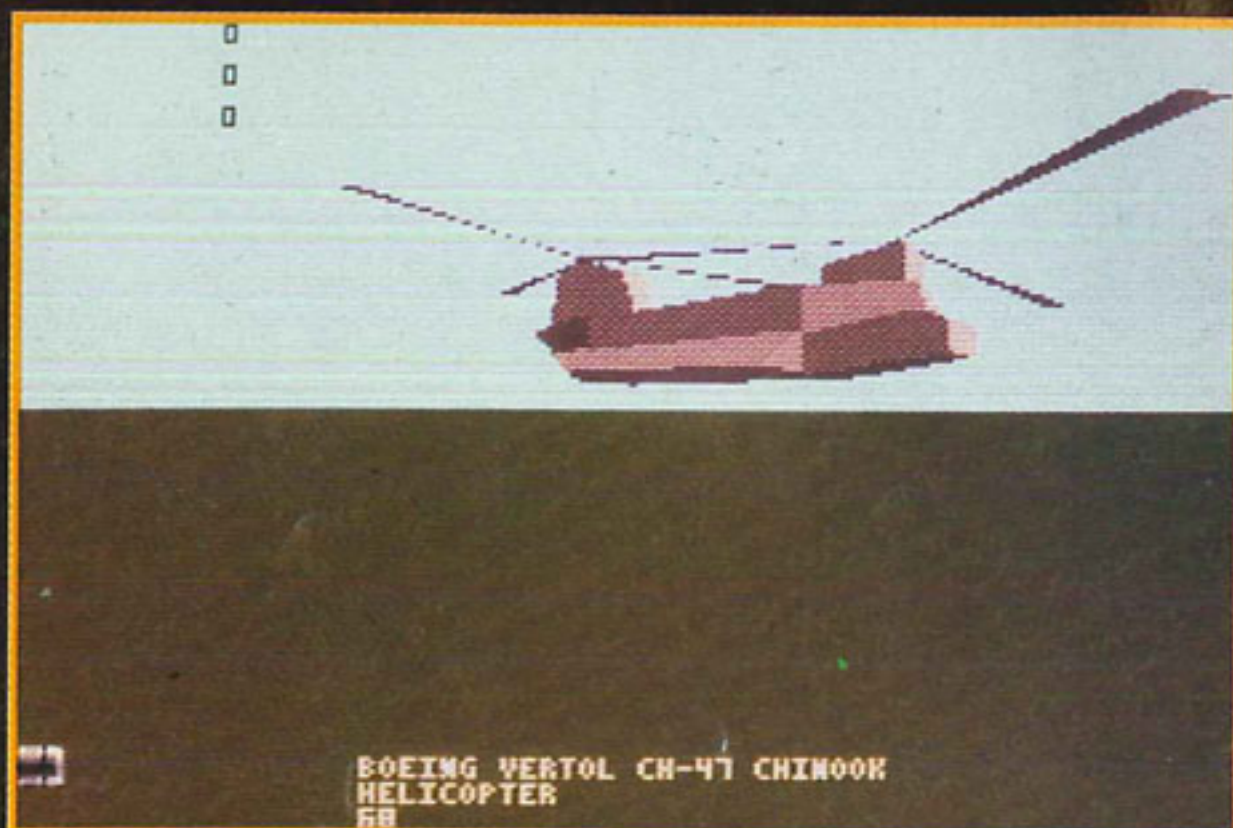
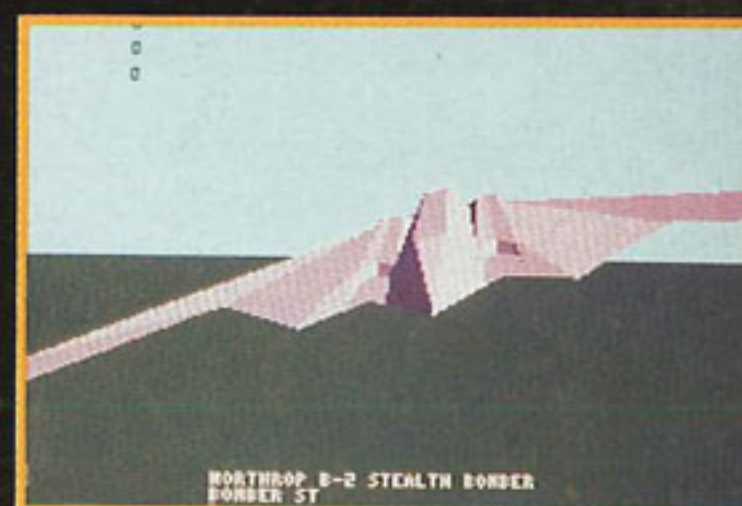
Since the first, crude sprites hopped across the earliest computer games, programmers and graphic artists alike have striven to incorporate two very different aspects of game design: addictive gameplay and computer-simulated, 3D realism - rarely, if ever, have the two met up in one game. The former has been relatively easy to achieve, requiring no more than the simplest graphics and coding, and a catchy idea for a game. But because of computer memory

restrictions, realistic 3D worlds have always seemed out of reach on the humble home machine. The original vector-graphics, or 'wire-frame' as they were called, was first used effectively in the space-trading blockbuster, Elite. The author, David Braben, was able to create a veritable galaxy of worlds in a 32K machine, thanks to these memory-thrifty, 3D graphics. But although the end result was years before its time, the wire shapes were colourless and transparent

and this failed to promote the effect of solidness, substance and realism.

In the early eighties, the Disney movie, Tron, marked a new era in computer-simulated 3D realism and many of the leading Vector-graphic designers will admit that the film was a great inspiration to them. But the fast-moving, solid, engulfing 3D world created by multi-megabyte mainframes was impossible to emulate on crude, eight-bit machines,

and so advances in 3D realism has been painfully slow. Commercially, graphic design evolution treaded water for years, until the advent of sixteen-bit home computing. With greater memory capacity and machine capability, considerable advances have been made using vector graphics. But these are not the wireframe structures from the past - now they are solid, coloured and shaded worlds which create the ultimate, realistic 3D effect.



Jez San (seated far left), and the growing ranks of Argonauts.



Jez San and the Argonauts - Hawk

If anyone can claim to be a major innovator and contributor to 3D, vector-graphic design, it is Jez San: 'My first project was a Defender variant called Skyline Attack for the Commodore 64.' Working with Foo Katan, Skyline was the first to have a sub-game which you could play while the main program was loading: 'I also wrote some programming books and got involved in the C64 version of Elite 64, and Foo began developing PDS on the IBM, which is used by many vector-graphic designers today. Shortly afterwards, I began experimenting with vector-graphic routines and demonstrated them to various publishers, including Tony Rainbird, who duly commissioned me to write Starglider. I had gained possession of the first ST in the country and I began designing graphic routines in conjunction with Starglider.' Starglider was one of the first games to be released on the ST, and was heralded as years before its time - an indication of the advances San achieved in a few short months: 'My methods during production were crude - I implemented the digitized music by measuring it by hand with a volt meter. Of course, Starglider was wireframe but it was still an intense exercise in 3D mathematics. In experimenting with algorithms, I discovered that vector is big maths and there was no short cut at the time.

The original design was to be an engineless glider which would pull off gravity, but the 3D effect lent itself to speed acceleration and deceleration and so the craft was fitted with an engine - the title remained though.

Starglider sold well and San used the revenue to set up his own design company, Argonaut. 'Now I could hire programmers and artists and we began designs for a sequel, Star Glider II. Experimenting with solid 3D graphics and various scrolling routines, the project took some six man-years to complete.' Again, San had broken new ground in graphic design and Starglider II was the first solid, vector-graphic 3D game. 'We worked on various designs and then dumped them in an incremental graphic system routine which redrew every frame. But the more we tried to include, the slower the processing and so we had to work on the algorithms to make it faster at turning and



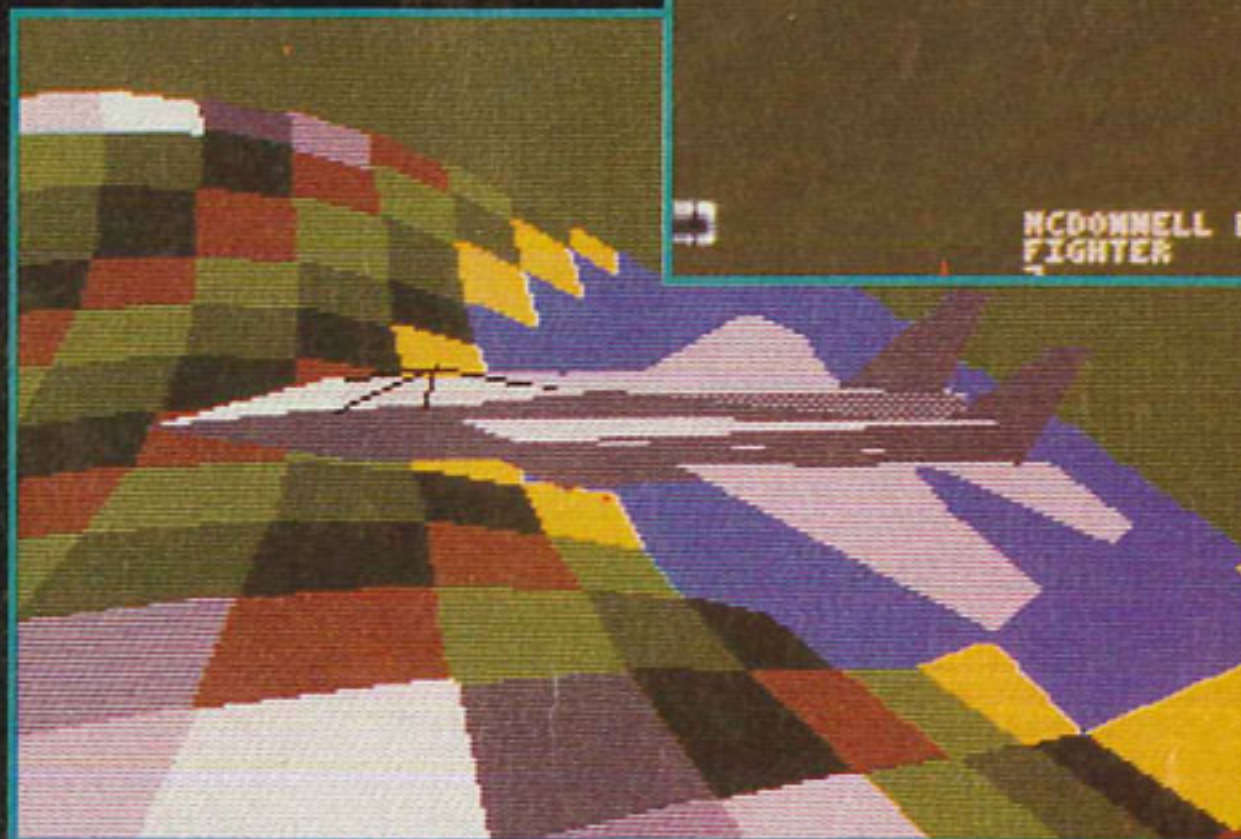
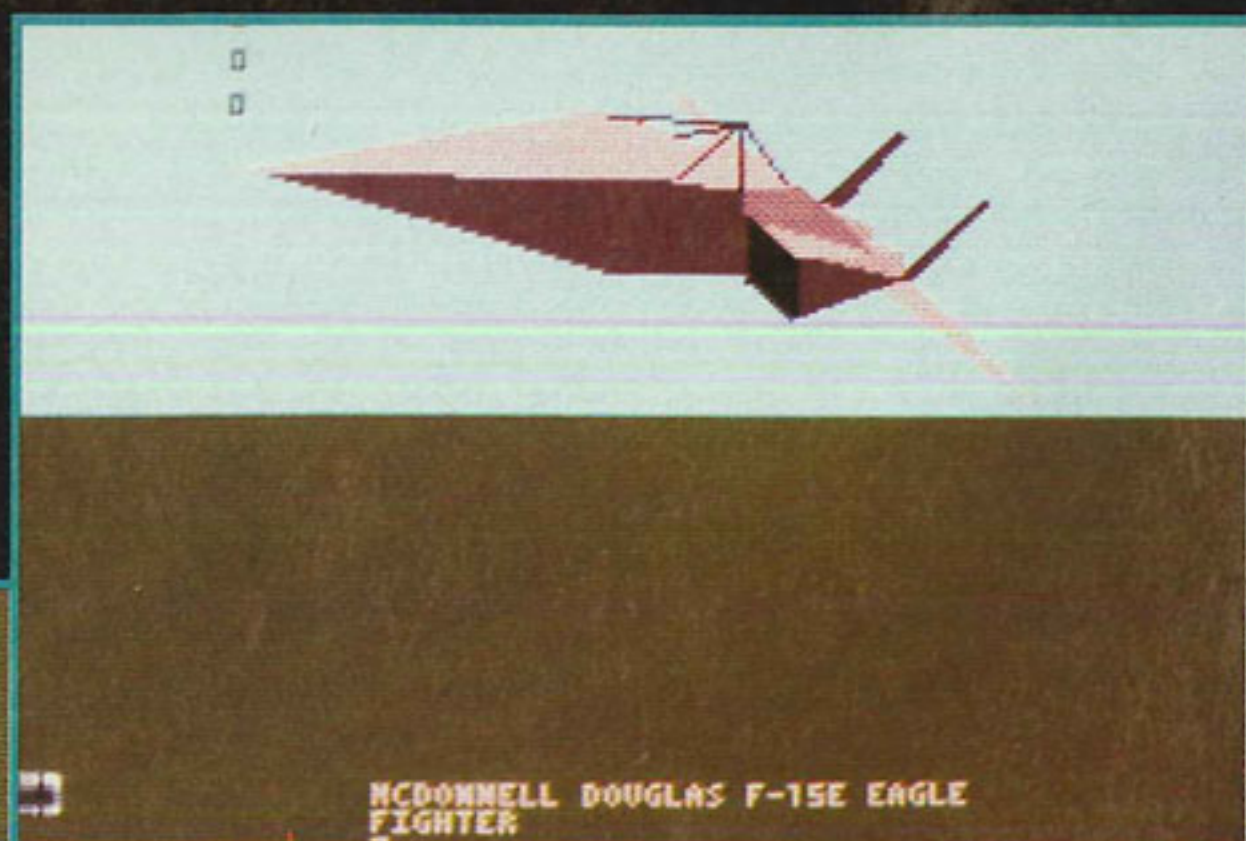
Starglider was years before its time and the sequel was the first to exploit solid 3D vector-graphics - another first for San.


moving the shapes, and this is where a great deal of the time was spent.'


Using these faster maths and countless other techniques learnt along the way, Argonaut are now working on the next generation of vector graphic design, Hawk: 'With Hawk, we're achieving more full 3D which is faster than ever before looking from a third-party viewpoint. We've mounted a camera on the vessel which can view the action from any angle. We've implemented full shadowing and shading and the ground objects are drawn in incredible detail without having any effect on the speed of the game.' With the graphic advances they have achieved, San reckons he has once again rewritten the text books: 'The routines we are using now move shapes twice as fast as anything before. Using the techniques and routines, the fruits of three years experimenting, San and the team can now concentrate on fine detail:

'The main thrust with Hawk is that it is a realistic aircraft simulation with accurate interpretation of aircraft flight, but there is a strong shoot'em-up element as well, with an artificially-intelligent enemy force.'

The team have developed their own development package which they intend to market. Called 'Argasm', San claims it is the fastest assembler in the world, running at some 1,000,000 lines a minute which is ten times faster than HiSoft's Devpac 2. But surely this would be giving away trade secrets on a plate? 'You can buy pencils and paintbrushes in an art shop but that doesn't make everyone a great artist!' What does the future hold for San and the Argonauts? 'In this game you've got to stay ahead of your rivals and so we're constantly experimenting with new techniques and routines.' In this game, there is, it would seem, no substitute for experience.



 Sunlight shines in one direction on all the polygons in Hawk, which is a major aspect of 3D realism never considered before.

 The aircraft storm across a patchwork terrain with astonishing speed and smoothness.

OFFICIAL Advanced Dungeons & Dragons[®] COMPUTER PRODUCT



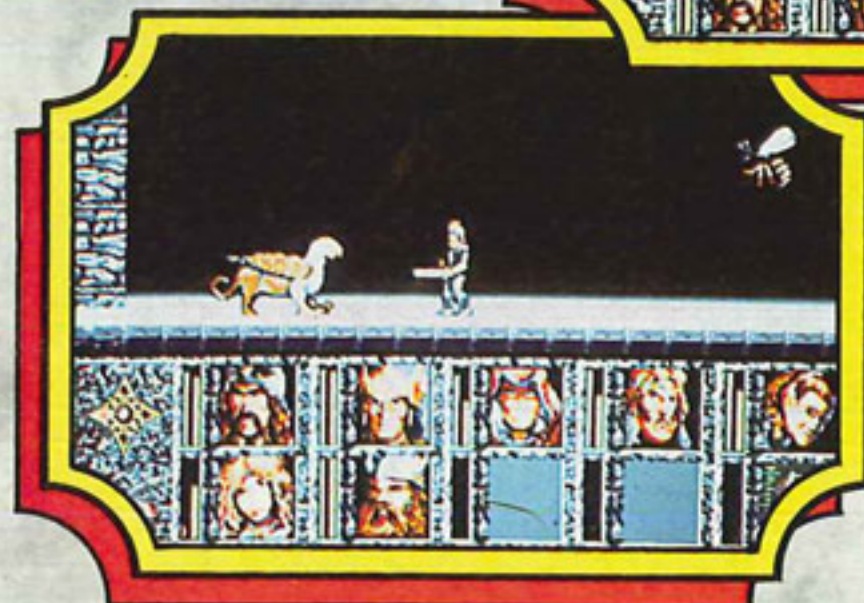
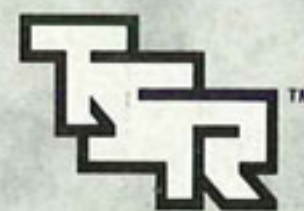
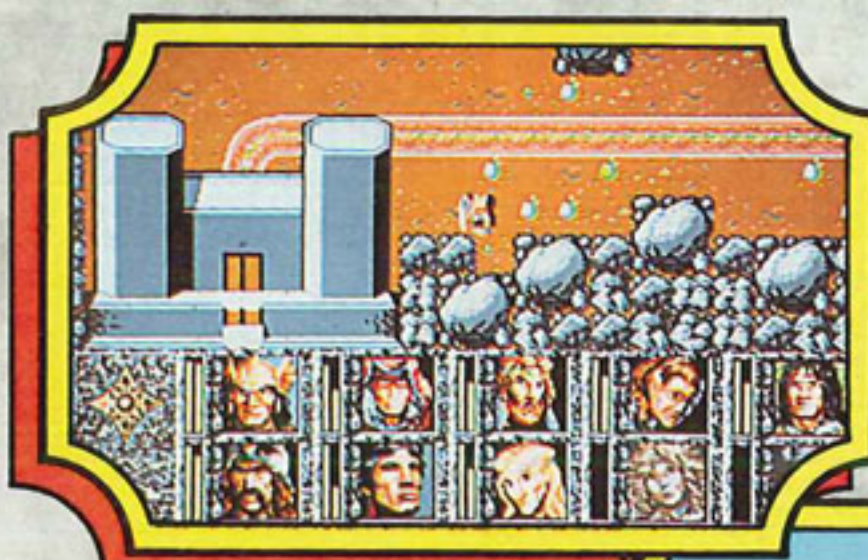
DRAGONS OF FLAME

HEROES OF THE LANCE
COME FORWARD...
THE EVIL QUEEN OF
DARKNESS GROWS IN
STRENGTH.

Takhisis, Queen of Darkness, and her Draconian hordes have overrun much of the homeland of Krynn, even the elven armies of Qualinost, valiant in their resistance to this evil power, struggle on the edge of defeat. It is only the returning Companions of the Lance that can halt this wave of tyranny before Krynn is consumed by evil. Freed from captivity by an elven assault column, the Companions under the guiding direction of the Cleric Goldmoon and bolstered by their success at recovering the mystical Disks of Mishakal, can once again restore a belief in the gods and unify the inhabitants of Krynn against the power of Takhisis.

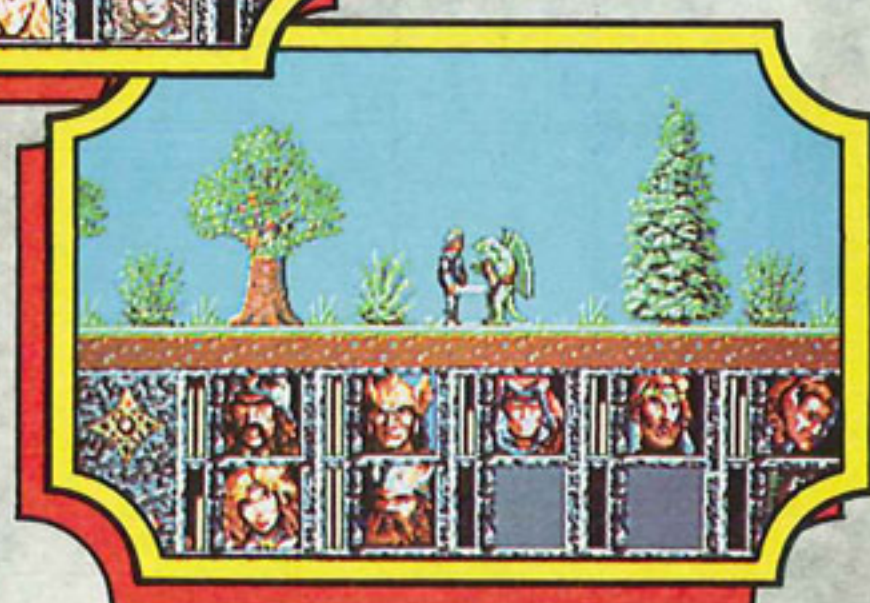
The Companions must move swiftly through this wartorn land, cautious of strangers but seeking compatriots and ever alert to the rapid advance of the Draconian forces. The courageous elves will finally fall, but there is one last chance to free the loyal slaves held in Pax Tharkas and join together to recover the long-lost sword Wrymslayer in what could be the vital rallying point in rekindling resistance to the plague of darkness sweeping over Krynn.

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Screen shots from various systems.

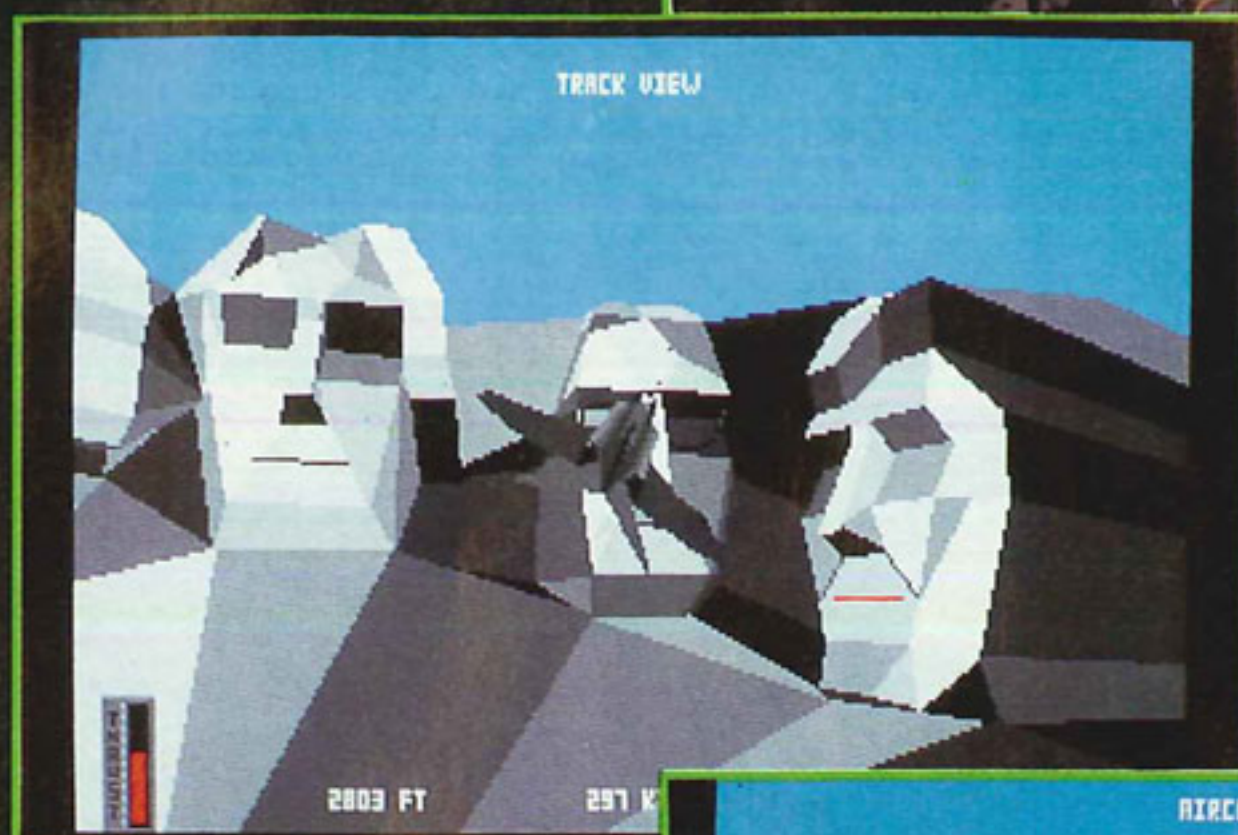
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Andy Craven, Vektor Grafix - Bomber

'We had just designed our own 3D, 6502, vector-line, graphics routines, when Domark approached us to do the Star Wars license game. But because we were not properly set up, we lost contact with them and it wasn't until much later that we actually started work on the game - in fact, eight weeks before the deadline! Domark demanded that we finish the project before the deadline and so, working twenty-four hours a day, literally, we completed the game just a few days over the zero hour. Almost immediately after Star Wars, we started work on the sequel, The Empire Strikes Back, which we completed in about four months. At the time, we were using the cross assembler, PDS, but now we have developed our own 68000-based system and assembler called SNASM. The results were fantastic and top design companies are interested in it.'

Armed with some 3D game demos, the team trekked to the CES show in Las Vegas, where they met Activision supremo, Rod Cousens, who duly signed them up for a multi-product deal. Currently, they are working on Bomber which has been delayed until next year. Bomber is a full vector-graphic flight-simulation, based on the annual, NATO bombing competition in which the jets and pilots from each country bomb targets. 'You can represent any nationality, and there's a choice of seven jets to fly. In

The Vektor Grafix team



In the past, aircraft in simulations have been crude shapes with one looking much like another. But in Bomber, great attention has been paid to the detail, size and airborne attitude of individual planes.



the past, plane fuselage shapes have been very simply drawn with one type of jet looking much like another. So we were determined to make every type of plane recognizable - some of the shapes consist of 100 polygons with 3D circles and ellipses. There are sixteen pre-set missions set in a free-flight map which is some 500 square miles.' The team have gone into meticulous detail on the terrain with a variety of road systems and river systems: 'Using photographs of US city skylines we redrew them with vector graphics in great detail - we even did a 250 polygon interpretation of Mount Rushmore which really looks spectacular. In addition to the individual missions, there are tasks to



As you can imagine from a design team of this experience, their current project, Bomber, is on the leading edge of vector-graphic design. But they are always aware of competitors and so production is a process of constantly up-dating with the latest discoveries and techniques.



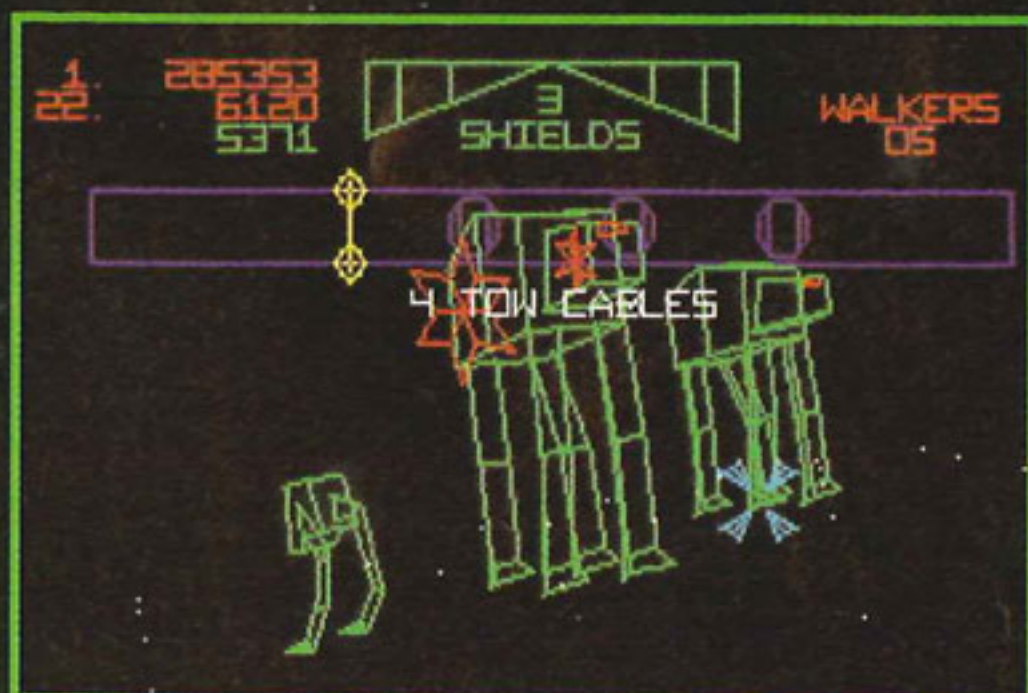
perform, such as mid-air refuelling with a KC10.' What is the team hoping to achieve with Bomber? 'Nowadays, some people want smooth scrolling, others want spectacular graphics, but everyone wants great gameplay - in Bomber, all of these aspects are going to figure in equal strength.'

The Vektor Grafix Design team is relatively big, comprising some twenty-four artists, musicians and programmers. Andy described how an initial concept turns into a full-scale project. 'Anyone in the team could have an idea and if we think it's promising, the design team turn it into a scenario, the programmers work on routines and the artists design the graphics. Production is always coordinated and so it's easy to keep tabs on progress.' Did the team achieve everything they wanted to in Bomber? On the whole, yes,

although we would have liked to include artificial-intelligence in the game - maybe in the sequel.'

At the moment, vector-designed games seem to be either set in abstract worlds or flight simulations - is that the way it'll always be? 'The graphics lend themselves to these types of game, but we're looking at all sorts of aspects of design. We're fortunate enough to have a separate team who are devoted to research and development into new graphic techniques while the production staff concentrate on the task in hand. But as more, and more people get involved in this design business they can easily pinch ideas, techniques and tricks.' We've heard predictions for vector graphics, the graphic technique, but for Vektor Grafix, the company, the future relies on staying one step ahead of a growing band of rivals.

Star Wars and the Empire Strikes Back established the team as the first choice in vector-graphics. The original was completed in eight weeks thanks to their ingenious vector-graphic routines.



TWINWORLD



* Great fun, colourful and addictive too: Overall rating: 81 %

A. Smith
Amiga Format (January issue)

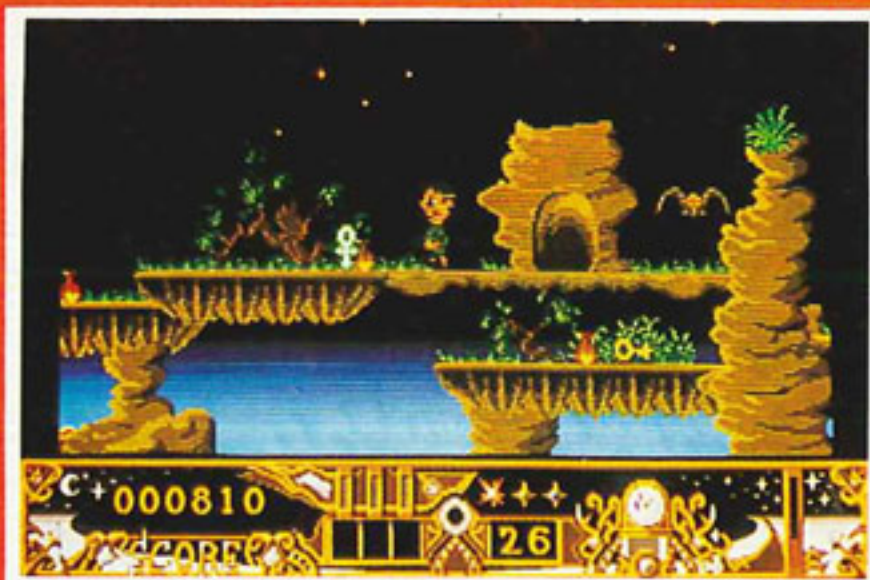
* It's one of the best 16 bit exploration games around. A great combination of platforms and arcade adventure action. Overall rating: 81 %

Computer & Video Games
(January issue)

* Twinworld is a lot of fun! Overall rating: 78 %

Phil King ZZAP (January issue)

A game created
by Blue Byte



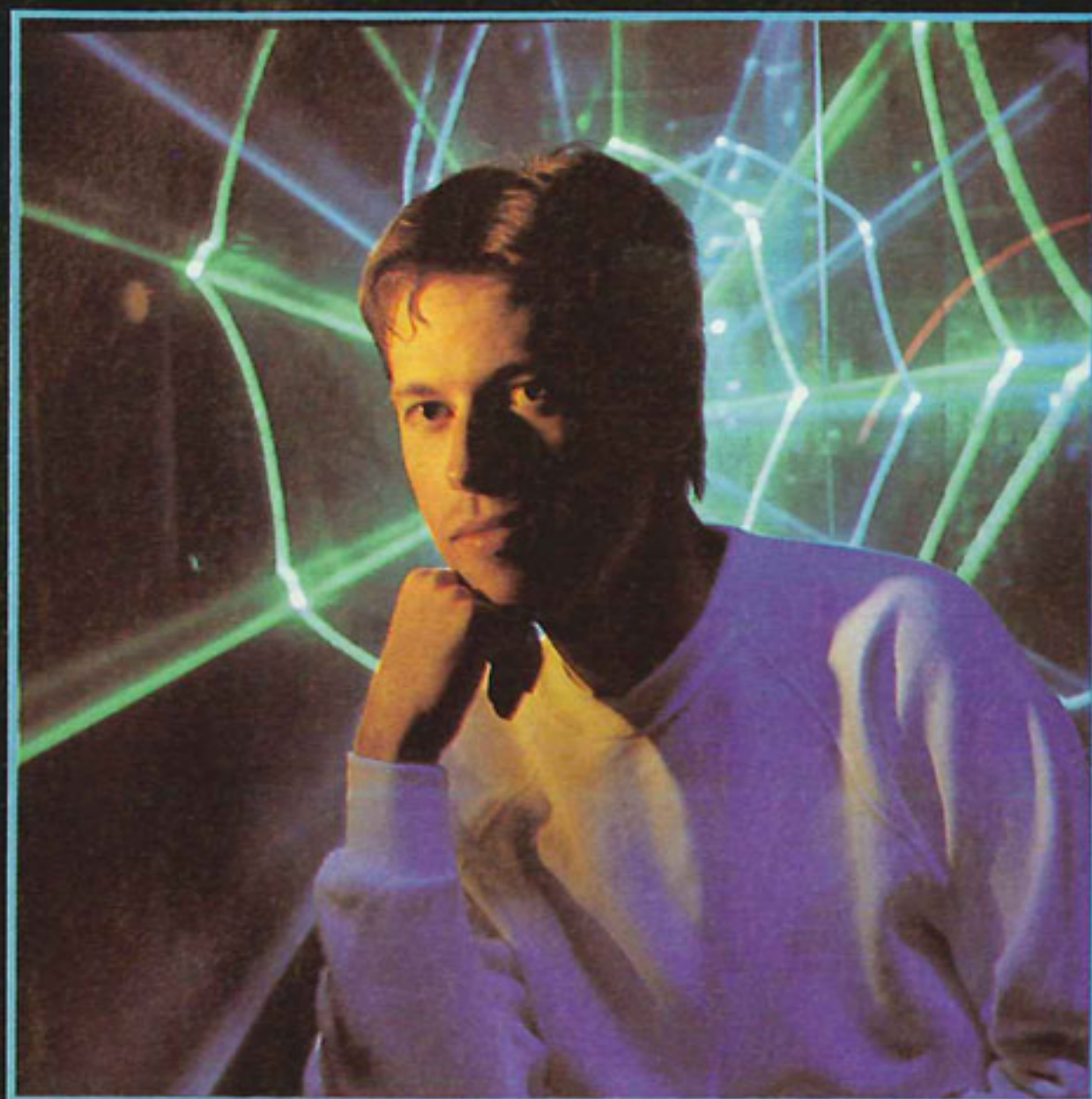
Available on ST and Amiga



Screenshots from Amiga Version

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Adrian Stephens - Interphase



Adrian Stephens: two years on the evolutionary project, Interphase, paid off with an award at the Tilt Do'r awards in Paris.

Adrian first got into commercial game design in the early 1980's and was responsible for many BBC arcade games including, the Donkey Kong clone, Killer Gorilla and Mr Ee. 'I bought an ST in 1986 and started work on a 3D concept game called, EPT. But the spec just went through the roof and although it was years ahead of its time, due to a lack of direction the project got scuppered - had we continued, it would have been released long before Starglider.' Adrian earned some much-needed money working on various projects and continued to experiment with 3D techniques: 'I showed Mirrorsoft various designs and joined the ranks

working on the concept of 3D, incorporating the routines and ideas into a game. We spent two years on Interphase designing a technique which could describe a drawn 3D shape and say how they move and look from all angles.' Stephens dealt with the machinations behind the project, the programming, and Dean Lester thought up the scenario. Dean would come up with these weird and whacky ideas, and graphic artist, Danny Emmett, would draw his interpretation of the idea and it would be down to me to move the thing. The process was quite simple. Using the drawings, Danny supplied me with a series of points,



The nature of vector-graphic design makes it an excellent tool for aircraft simulation. But the surrealistic world of Interphase broke the mould, proving that these distinctive and malleable graphics can be used for all types of game.

lines and polygons and I would effect these coordinates on screen.'

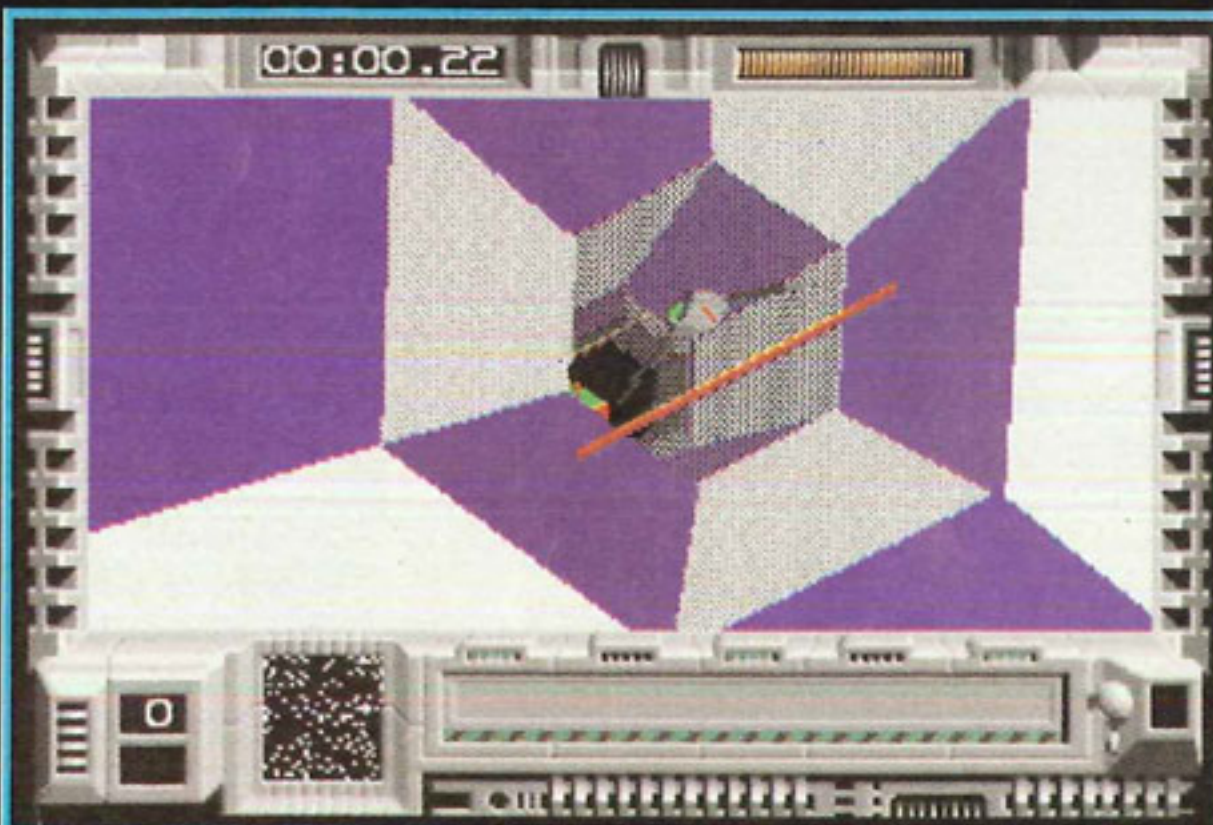
Why did Interphase take two years to develop? 'It was very much an evolutionary project which slowly brought together these strange ideas, 3D routines and programming techniques.' Briefly define vector graphics? 'There's no easy way to describe it! It's pure, unmitigated maths - a way of defining shapes, orientation and space - a question of multiplying matrices - short of presenting you with a page full of algebra I can't really say any more. The physical side of the process - i.e. drawing in 3D - is a little more straight forward, but you have to think in 3D perspective - nowadays, there's a huge library of routines to call upon. In 3D, you take an object, you define where it is and was and roughly what it does - that's what you've got to sort out.'

Most of the vector-graphic-designed games are aircraft simulations - was there a conscious effort to make Interphase surrealistic and different? 'The technique lends itself to this type of game, and Interphase isn't that far

removed from that - the only difference is that, instead of recognizable objects such as hills and buildings, the objects are weird and surreal. There are pros and cons with both styles of game. For example, if you've got something to copy, such as photographs of skylines, it's easy to copy, although, it will always be compared with the original, and so it has to be good. But with surrealism, there's nothing to compare it with. Are advances still being made? 'Yes, we've developed a system which can create ellipses from a circle of any oblique angle. SNASM is the latest big leap in vector-graphic design which is much quicker and far less bug-ridden than anything before.' What about the growing number of vector graphic designers? 'A lot of people can draw polygons but few could produce a game which anybody would be interested in playing. Additionally, we're looking at shading polygons to create smooth objects. Using the Touraud shading technique, we shaded a polygon at the beginning of Interphase - in the future we hope to utilize the technique as an integral part of the game.'



vector-graphic design is fiercely competitive, and Adrian Stephens is understandably boastful about a technique never successfully achieved in 3D before, 3D ellipses.



This screen demonstrates a number of different vector-graphic effects drawn at different angles and separately animated.



Martin Kenwright - Goldrunner III

assembling one big world! In scale, Falcon is a massive and changing terrain and so this was a very arduous task. But I think it's this attention to detail which set it apart from other simulations.' Kenwright had devised a totally new 3D system for Falcon, and was suddenly in great demand for other projects. Concurrently, I developed Intruder for Holobyte, and over the next eighteen months I really clocked up some flying hours, you might say.'

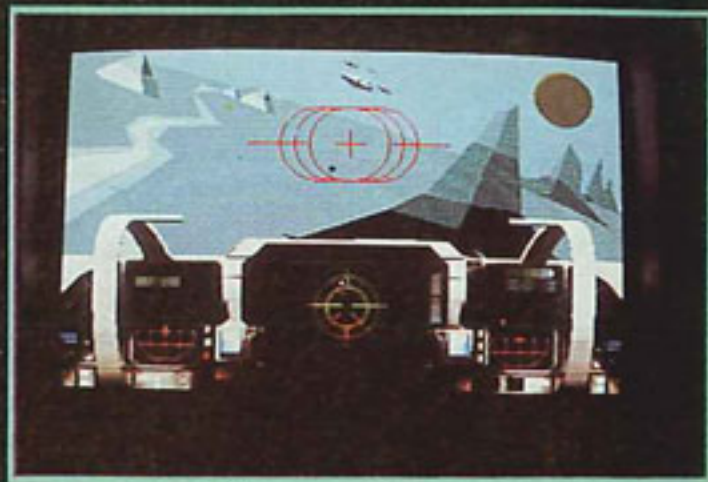
Everyone I've spoken to in this feature has boasted that they have produced multiple-polygon objects and the fastest 3D. But is speed so important? What's the point of drawing 120 polygons when 30 are sufficient? (Just for the record, the mothership in Goldrunner III is 156 polygons). These multi-sided graphics may look pretty in a magazine, but it's totally impracticable.' What I'd say is that in Goldrunner III and Retaliator, we've achieved scroll rates and detail which will be very difficult to equal. For example, we've tried to use the correct pallets for various aspects of detail, rather than unrealistic and gaudy purple mountains which you might see in other games. In Falcon, a mountain, for example, was represented by a pyramid-shape. But in Goldrunner we've introduced proper terrain detail, and so a mountain is a mountain and a ravine is a ravine - there's no limit to the amount of detail we can put in now.

So with 3D routines and vector-graphic assemblers, surely anyone could produce a state-of-the-art 3D game? 'Believe me, it's not that easy! Even now, there's no substitute for drawing everything on graph paper - it's imperative to get the exact angle and perspective. Then, all the points must be linked together in particular sequences in order to maintain an harmonic, 3D environment.' But just how do you get 3D to move? 'I'm more a graphic artist than a

programmer and so I leave that to the other members of the team, Russel Payne and Phil Allsop. Using our own, dedicated, 3D map editor, we can move around a 3D world and position the objects accordingly. Also, using Tempest II, the computer assembles one object at a time and then displays it spinning from every angle and I can position it wherever I want.' But how fast is Goldrunner? 'The ST actually clocks faster than the Amiga, and in certain parts, the game moves at 30 frames per-second, although at that point, there's less detail on screen.'

Vector graphics are more economic, more malleable and look more impressive than sprites - does this mean the end of sprite-orientated games? 'It would be easy to say that sprite-based games had died a death. But we still use sprites for effects such as starfields and explosions. What I think will happen is that vector-graphic design will continue to improve while sprites have already

In Goldrunner, Kenwright experimented with different palettes to achieve a realistic effect. Now a mountain is a mountain and a ravine a ravine - no gaudy purple colours here.



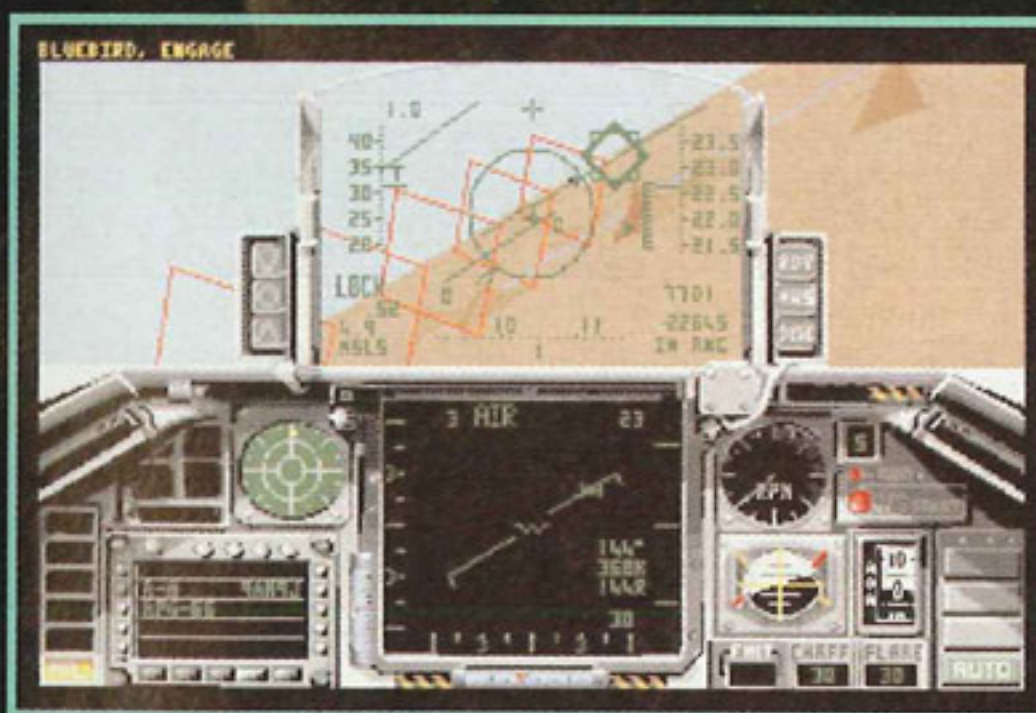
gone as far as they can - perhaps there'll be more use of both, utilizing their individual attributes?' Concurrently, the team is working on Retaliator, a 100-mission war game with fully-interactive battles. Using the graphics capability of the Amiga and the speed of the ST, they're keeping the lid on games which are due at the start of next year.

Everyone seems to be jumping on the 3D bandwagon, so what does Kenwright predict will happen in the future? 'Competition is ferocious with more and more people discovering faster 3D. This time next year, I reckon, 3D vector graphic games will outnumber sprite-based - effectively, there'll be a 3D boom!'

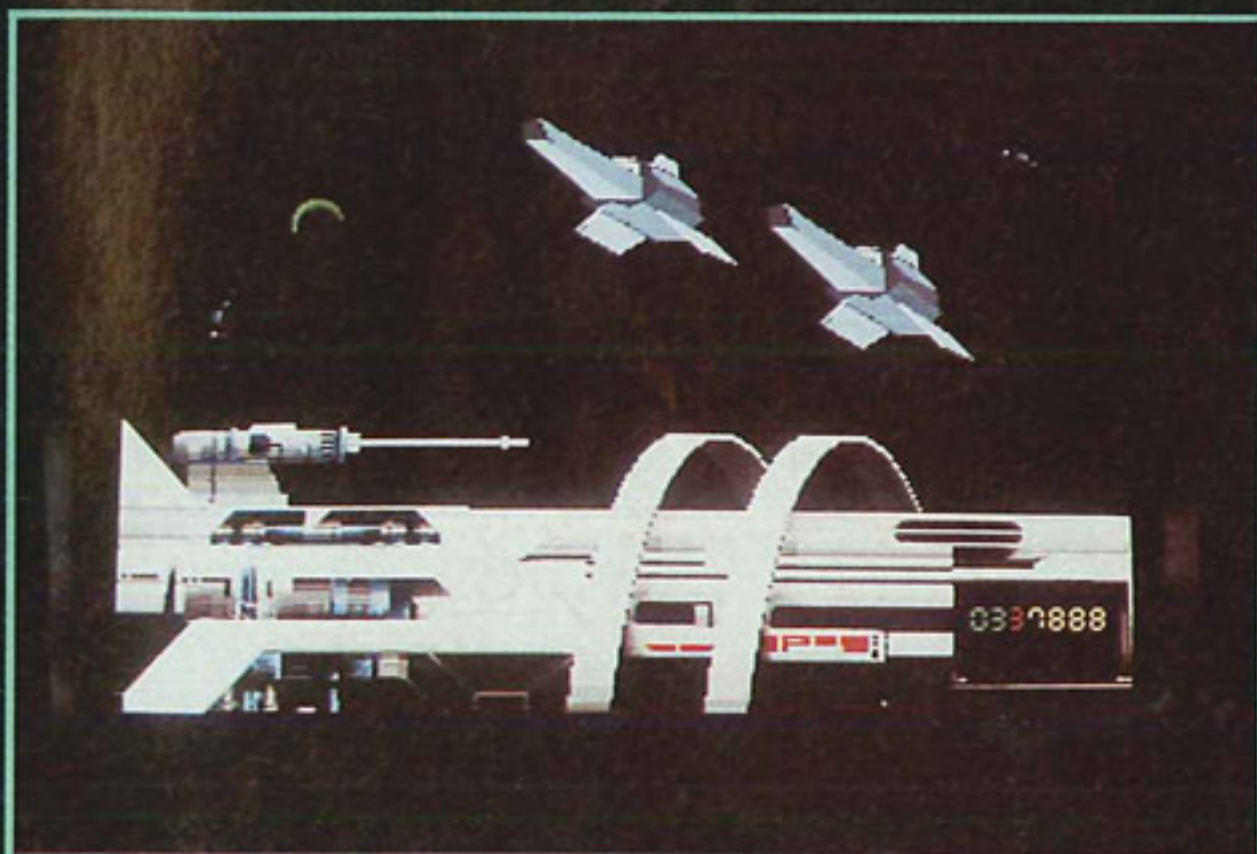
Whichever way you look at it, the list of games designed by graphic artist, Martin Kenwright, is impressive. Both sprite-orientated and vector-graphic games, they include such titles as the ultimate flight simulation, Falcon, which succeeded his earlier sprite-driven air simulations, Spitfire 40 and Strike Force Harrier. Currently, he is working on the spectacular 3D space-flight simulation, Goldrunner III, as well as Retaliator for Ocean.

'I started my first project, Strike Force Harrier, when I was still at college. I guess I'd describe myself as a frustrated, latent fighter-pilot and so I really tried to make 'Harrier' as realistic as possible. I did it the hard way, drawing normal sprites bit by bit, and then experimenting with different routines to get them to move as fast and as smoothly as possible. It was a painstaking process, creating scrolling backgrounds and then separately animating enemy aircraft and ground detail.' At the time, Harrier was the most advanced aircraft simulation, but Kenwright was frustrated by the limitations and could see that with better equipment and greater memory, the sky was literally the limit.

Martin began developing solid vector graphics and demonstrated them to U.S. air-simulation specialists, Spectrum Holobyte - shortly afterwards, he started the Falcon project. I had to draw all the 3D objects and detail from scratch, but using the 3D assembler, which I had just developed, I could turn to the backdrop and position the objects at will - it's like



In Falcon, a mountain was represented by simple pyramid shapes: 'What Falcon did for aircraft simulations, I want Goldrunner III to do for vector-graphic design and space war simulation.'



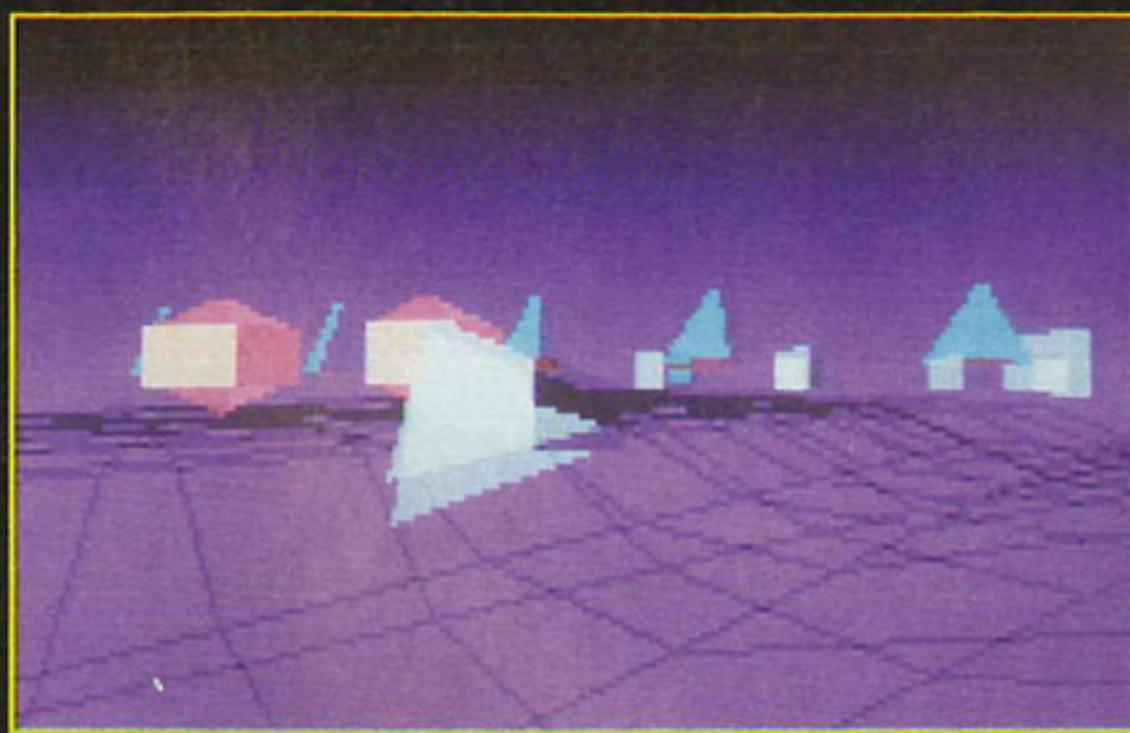
Using a dedicated map-editor (their own invention), Kenwright can literally place 3D objects anywhere within the 3D environment

Brian Pollack - Thunderstrike

Brian Pollack cut his teeth at Telecomsoft, performing the somewhat mundane task of converting Firebird games onto various formats. He then moved to Teque for a brief spell, where he produced, amongst others, the excellent Blasteroids. But it wasn't until recently that he began experimenting with 3D vector graphics. 'I've just completed a version of Star Ray on the Konix machine, and while I was working with 3D vector graphics, I had an idea for my own project, 'Thunderstrike' (working title). It seems to me that the majority of designers working with vector graphics try to make the games grand-scale, strategy games

or aircraft simulations, which is all very well, but I think it can be equally effective in shoot'em-ups. Some of my favourite games from the past are very simplistic games, such as Ballblazer, and so I wanted to convey a sense of fun in a spectacular 3D environment.'

The game adopts the standard shoot'em-up formula, with you controlling a fighting vessel against an alien force, but vector graphics are used to great effect on the terrain and enemy craft: 'The game started out as a look, or an atmosphere if you like, and I tried to work out a way of incorporating this effect in a shoot'em-up. I developed the graphics on a VGA PC,



Vector-graphics are used to great effect in the terrain and enemy craft in Thunderstrike (working title).

which has the highest standard graphics and, although the ST version will obviously be a few steps down, it will only be one generation down from the very best. I wanted to show the game from different angles and so I incorporated an unseen TV crew who film the game from different angles as you blast the enemy, which makes great use of the solid and shaded polygons. Because vector graphics are relatively economic in comparison to conventional sprites, the tendency is to overdo it with multi-sided polygons which just clog and clutter up the game. But I wanted to make this game as quick as possible, and so I kept things simple.'

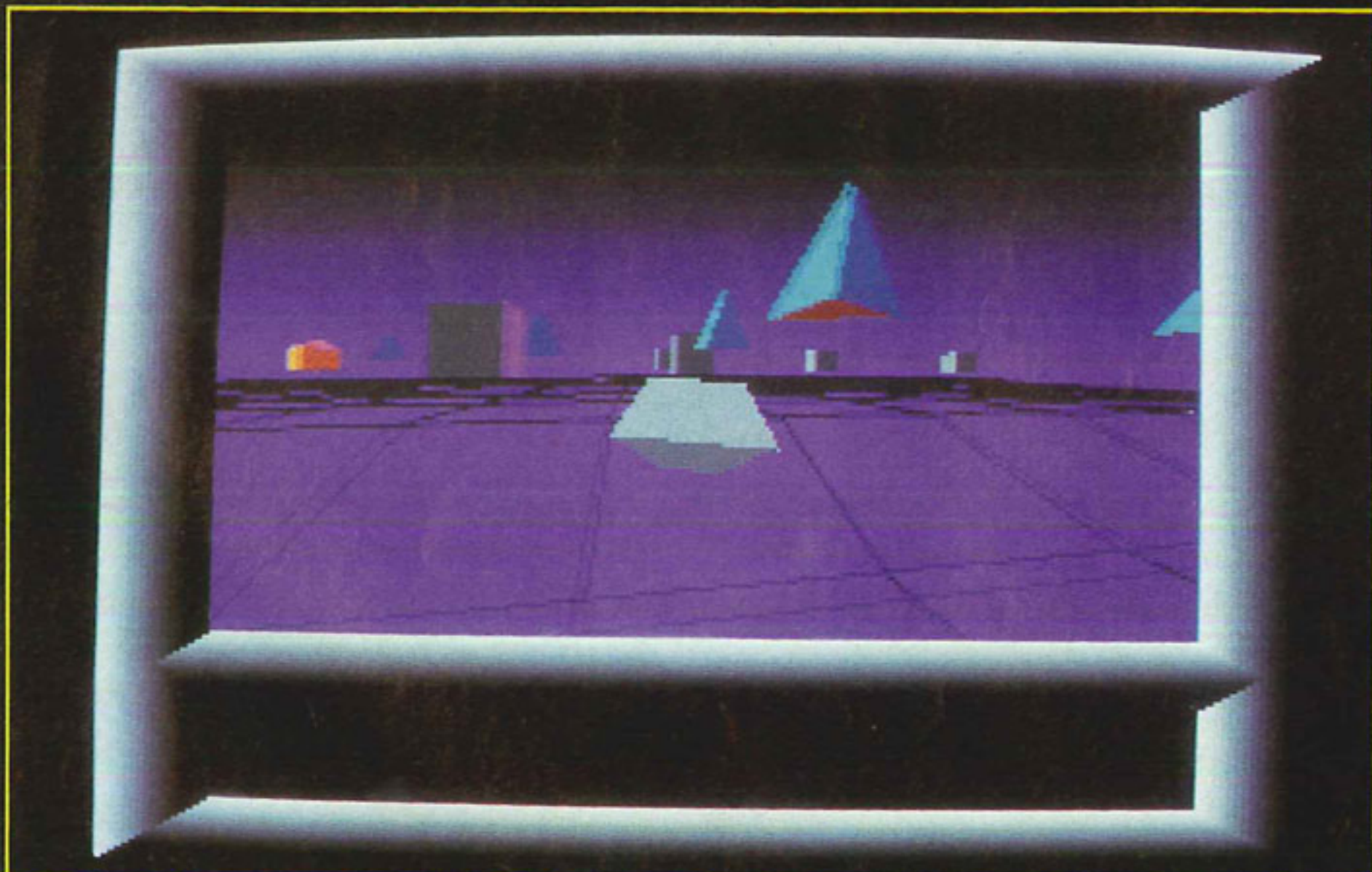
The undulating terrain scrolls beneath you at an incredible lick, taking up the full width of screen and the game really demonstrates that vector graphics can be used for any number of game styles: 'You talk to a publisher about a vector

graphics game and he invariably says, "Oh no, not another one!" How come he doesn't say the same about a sprite-orientated shoot'em-up? What is the fundamental difference between conventional sprite design and vector graphics? 'Working with sprites, you draw the objects and then work out a set routine to get them to move as fast as possible, but with vector graphics you have to try different methods. Once you've got the mathematics sorted out and simplified, you code it and, using graph-paper, work out dimensions and scale and draw the maps using D Paint. I've got a program which pulls out the pixels and converts them into heights which effectively is a contour map.' What are the advantages of Vector-graphic design? 'There's certainly greater freedom and more memory to play with and the dynamics and movement are considerably more versatile.' What difficulties do you encounter during production? 'A particular problem is getting the angle of light correct as it falls on all of the objects as they move. As an object moves, the light-intensity changes on the polygon. VGA has 16 shades in each colour, but that will be scaled down to four shades on ST which is barely adequate.

'Pollack based a lot of his theories on 3D from working on the sprite-based game, Blasteroids.' Vector graphics may be a considerably more advanced graphic design technique, but I still work on the premise that the most addictive game formulas are often the simplest.



Pollack's theory is that vector-graphics can be used just as effectively in a fun, arcade game as in a more serious simulation. 'I'm working on the premise that a game should be like a movie - a spectacle - but not forgetting that, often, the most addictive game formulas are the simplest.'



The tendency is to overdo it with vector-graphics, and the more you try to put in, the slower the game becomes. Pollack has used polygons economically to maintain the pace of the game.

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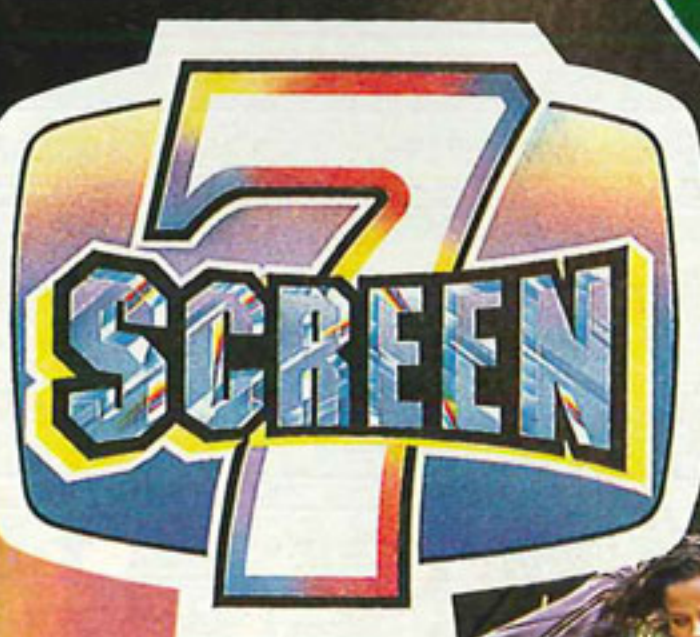
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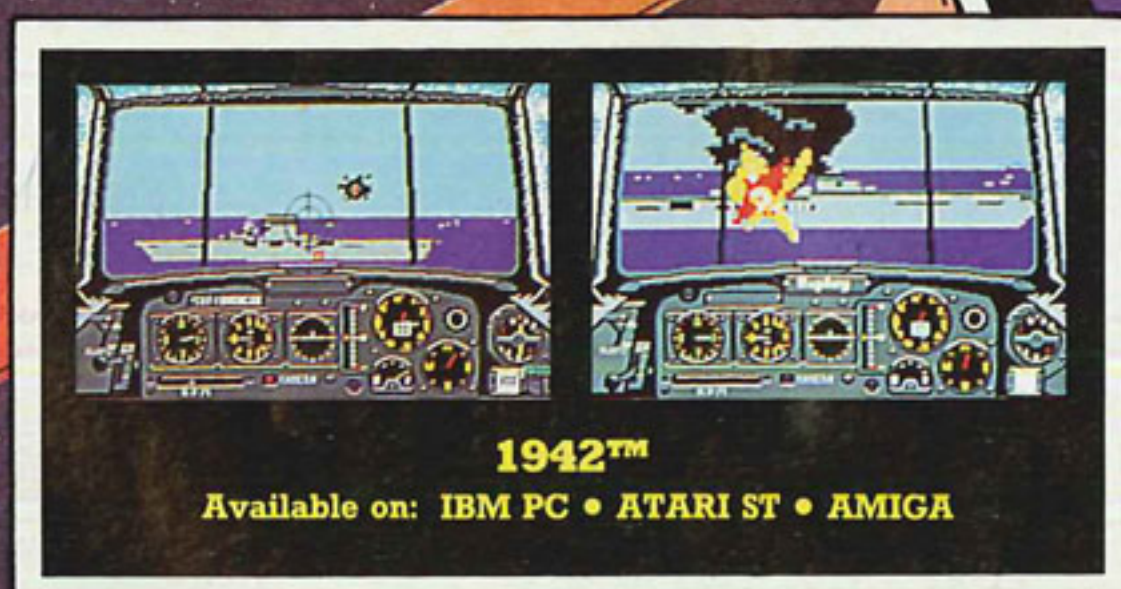
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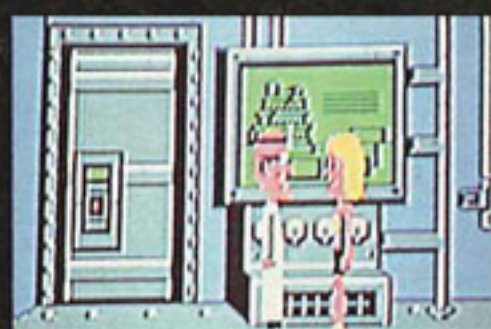
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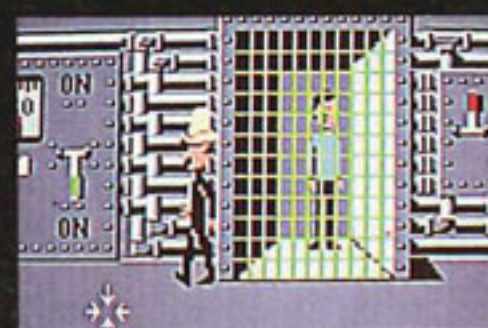
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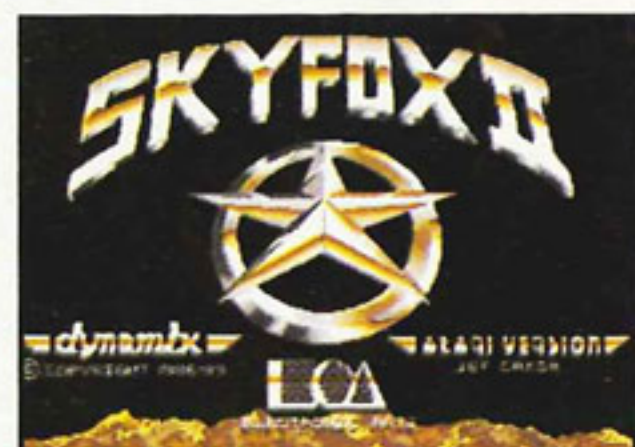
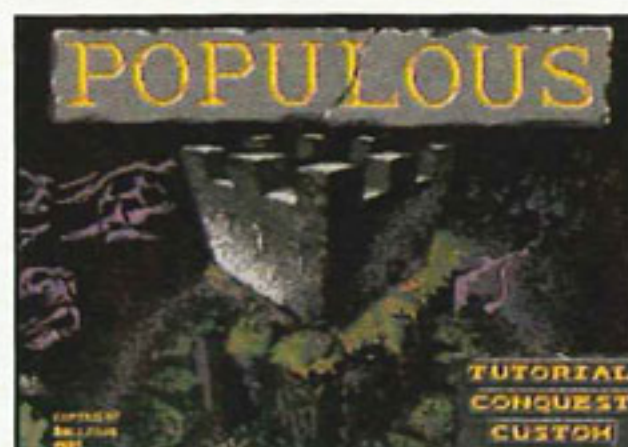
win a copy of E.A.'s fully-animated Battle Chess. Fore! Zany Golf is a must for all you crazy golf fanatics, while the more seriously minded racing enthusiasts amongst you will just love Ferrari Formula One. Meanwhile, the Hound of Shadow will present you with many mysterious and macabre puzzles. Wargames aren't everyone's cup of tea, but there can't be anyone who hasn't fancied being god and leading your people into battle. Well, now's your chance with Bullfrog's STA1-rated classic, Populous. Doubtless, there will be many of you who already have this wonderful game. If that's the case, how's about winning another set of weird and wonderful words - The Promised Lands. I'm sure you'll agree Electronic Arts have just about something for everyone and, should you be lucky

enough to win one of the runners-up prizes, you'll be able to choose any game from their back-catalogue.

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THE QUESTIONS

1. What is the name of the development team responsible for E.A.'s top-selling games, Populous and Fusion?

- A) Ribbitsoft
- B) Bullfrog
- C) Whizzbang
- D) Toadie Soft

2. E.A.'s, the Hound of Shadow, is based upon stories by which macabre author?

- A) B.A. Robertson
- B) H.G. Wells
- C) H.P. Lovecraft
- D) H.P. Sauce

3. What made Battle Chess so novel?

- A) The pieces were fully animated
- B) It was the first chess game to use a 3D perspective
- C) It had uncompromising stereo sound
- D) It contained an ornate chess set in the package

4. Electronic Arts have recently released a budget label. How much do these classic titles cost?

- A) £11.99
- B) £14.99
- C) £4.99
- D) £9.99

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Written and designed by Dr Peter Turcan. Illustration by Peter Curzon



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Prepare to take off from your mother ship, and then take on the Fourth Empire in a fight to the death.



"This is Grey Leader, reporting for duty, Sir", you say as you enter the control room - and staring straight into your eyes is the stern-faced captain. "What time do you call this, Private? Now get in that spacecraft and do this planet justice", shouts the captain, leaving a ringing noise in your ear as he nearly deafens you. "Yes Sir", you reply, and then run off and climb into your state-of-the-art fighter. You scan the control panel: everything is operational. Switching on the main thrusters, you acknowledge permission for take-off. The ship begins to vibrate as you steadily climb off the landing pad. "Grey Leader,

you are cleared for combat, please accelerate to attack speed and engage the enemy, Good luck", crackles a voice over the radio. You're on your own this time, so make all of them shots count. You have to fight The Fourth Empire in this space-age shoot'em-up, and to do this, you have to control your ship with all the skill of an ace fighter pilot.

There are five levels on galaxy force, and all you have to do to defeat the Empire, is destroy all of the enemy craft on each level and penetrate each of the fortresses on each level. The beginning of each level sees your ship being launched out into the unknown, either into deep space or over a planet's surface, and from now on the controls are yours. Using the joystick, you have to destroy the waves of alien scum that have been sent out to exterminate you; but one quick blast from your bow-mounted particle projection cannon should show them what for. When the waves of aliens stop advancing on you, a message will flash on screen, telling you to penetrate the fortress in front of you.

Look! Sombodys really got to take a hold of this coin-op conversion scene. When you pay 20p and sit in an Afterburner, Space Harrier or Galaxy Force cockpit, you're paying for two or three minutes of a complete experience including movement, courtesy of hydraulics, and graphics which are generated by massive machines. Invariably, these conversions are pale comparisons, which shows how these machines rely on effect rather than game content. Galaxy Force's crude graphics and repetitive gameplay puts it in the realms of such major coin-op conversion failures as the much maligned Afterburner. Activision are a leading software company who have a reputation for releasing quality games - obviously the license must have cost a king's ransom, but the end result is just not worth twenty quid.

JS

Galaxy force reminded me of that pathetic conversion, AfterBurner, except that it was set in the future. The game was fairly good to begin with, but after a short time it became boring and I found myself reaching for the off switch. The game was far too repetitive for my liking, but if a different level had been added it might have caught my attention. The game's graphics are reminiscent of the Titus game, Galactic Conqueror, except that Galaxy Force is smoother. All in all, I think that without the hydraulic chair, as in the arcade version, the game is nowhere near as good as it could have been, and because of that I can't really recommend it.

AS

STA
Rating

50%

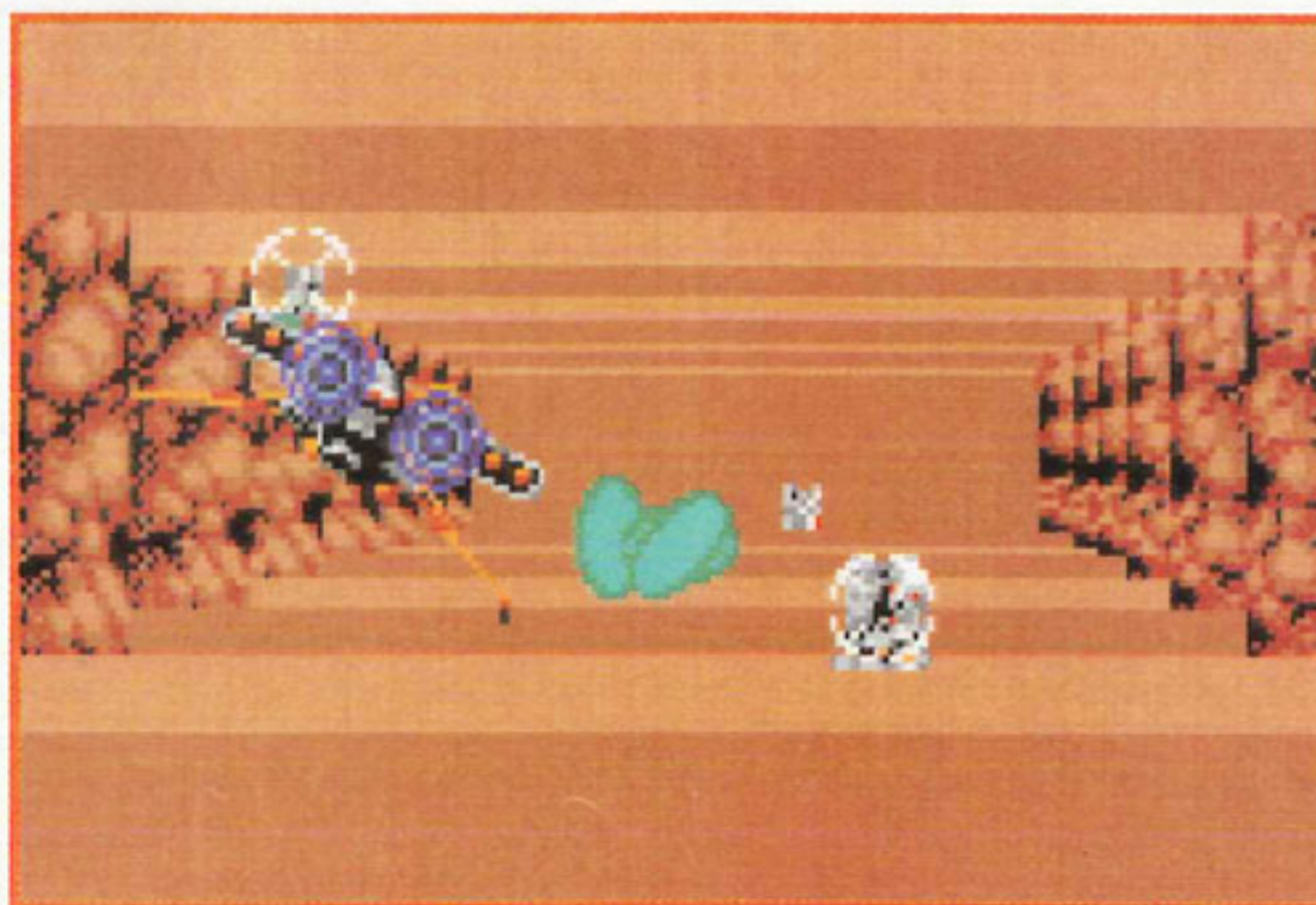
GRAPHICS: 49%
SOUND: 43%

LASTING APPEAL: 48%
ADDICTIVENESS: 52%

DIFFICULTY: EASY
1ST DAY SCORE: 99600

This is done by flying into a small opening in the front of the fortress and destroying the enemy within. Flying inside the tunnels of the fortress is harder than just joy riding in space, because you have to slalom to the left and right. When approaching a corner, a voice will warn you and tell you which way to turn, but if you are too slow your ship will go up in smoke. So hurry, Grey Leader, jump into your flight suit, power up your lasers and show them what you are made of.

STA



Once you have destroyed or avoided the other enemy craft, you have to penetrate the fortress by flying in and out of the network of tunnels inside.

MISSION

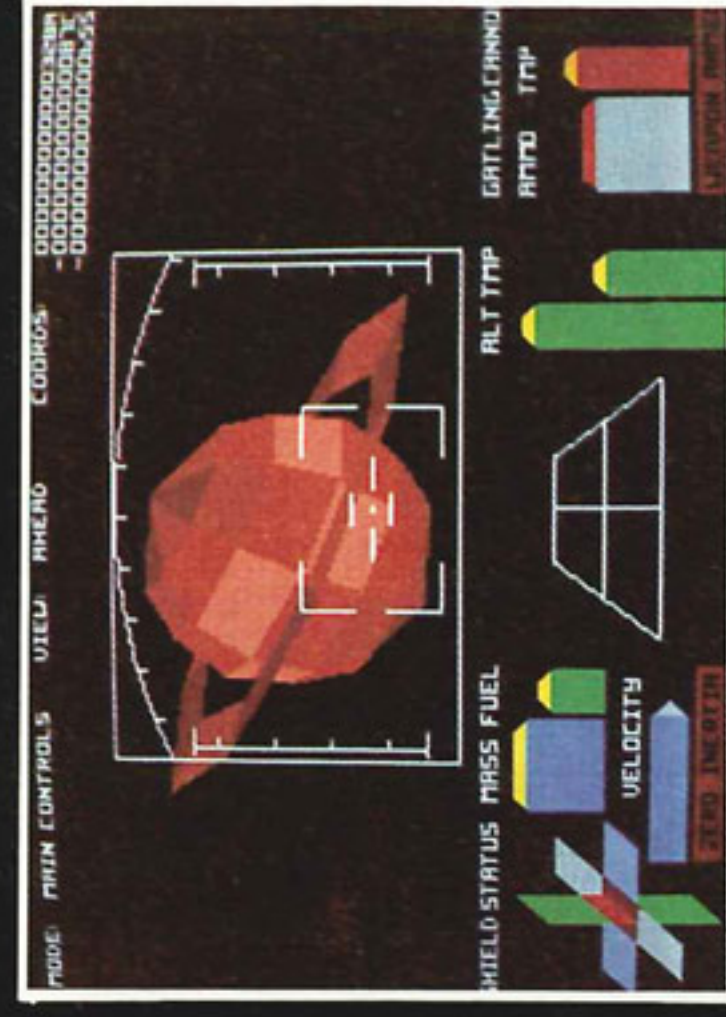
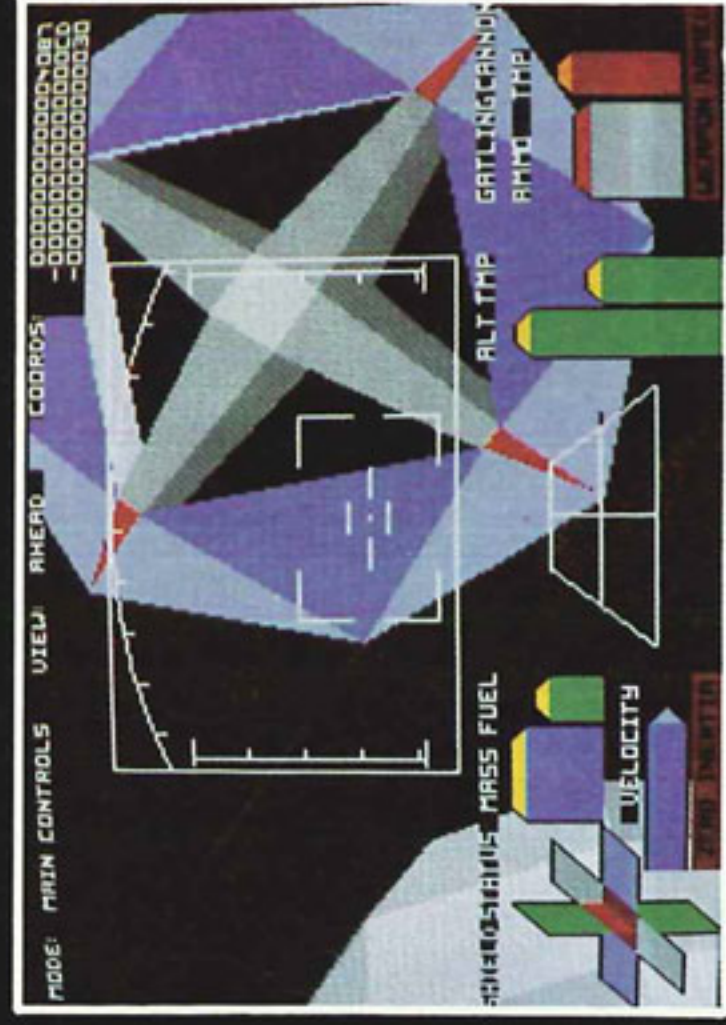
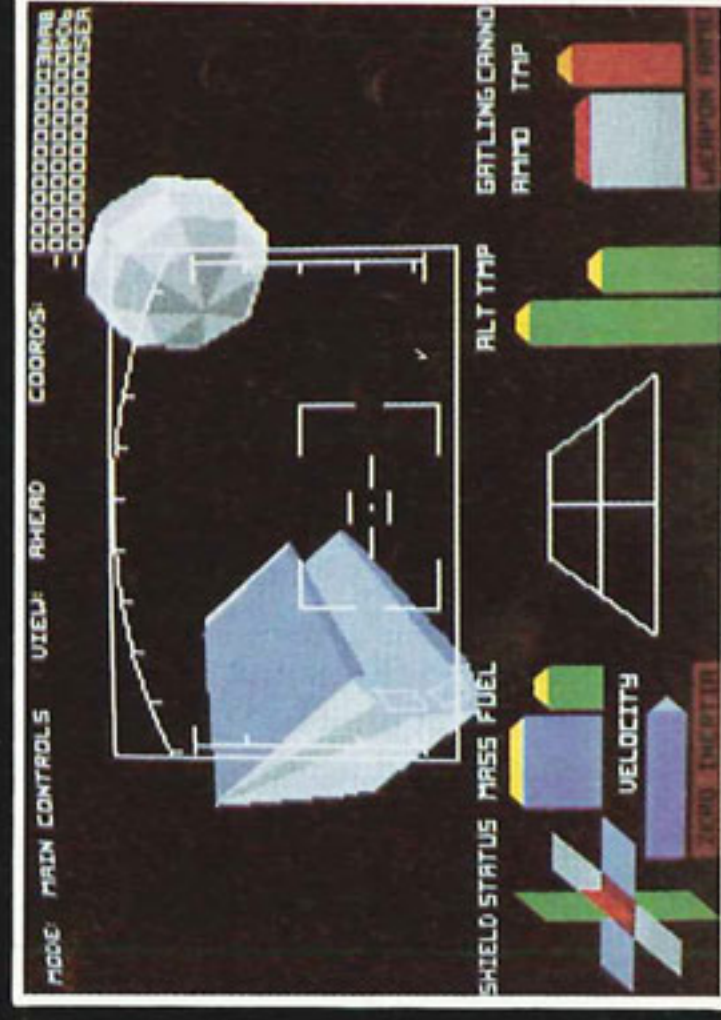
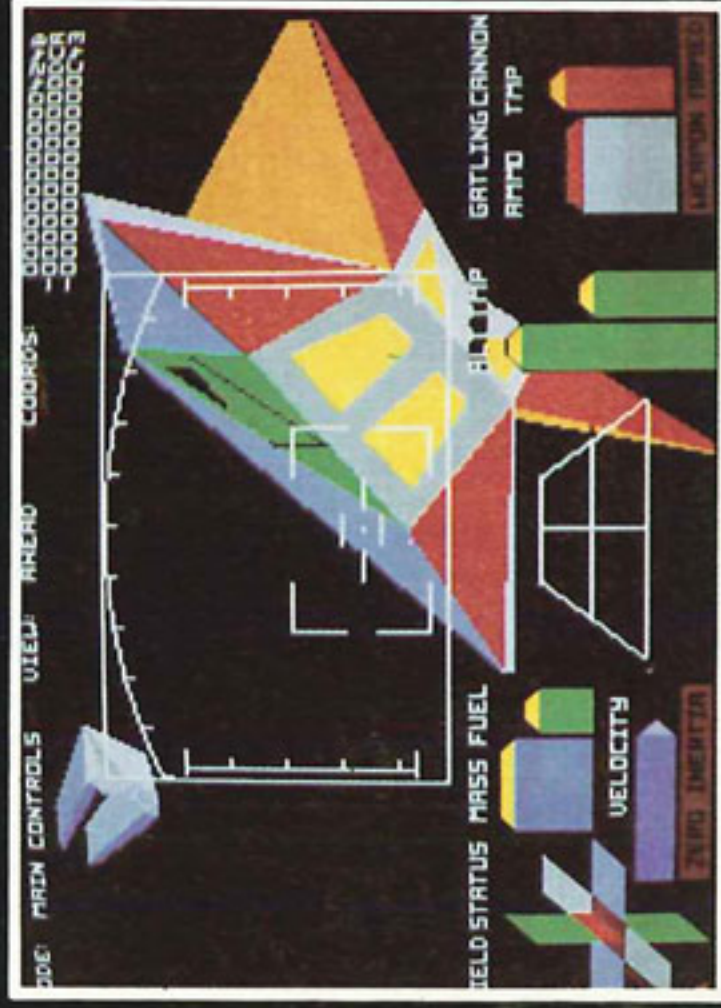
'A sophisticated space simulation based on our own solar system in the year 2100'

The year is 2100, nearly ten years since the Multinationals took effective control of the governments of earth and the carve-up of land and resources between them began.

Then came news of a new invention, the Mass Stabilizer, an incredible piece of equipment which effectively neutralises the mass of an object. The consequences of this invention were far reaching, anti-gravity and faster than light travel and communications being among the most important.

Suddenly the exploitation of the solar system became a viable proposition, taking the Multinationals completely by surprise. The more enterprising of the small companies and wealthy entrepreneurs were quick to seize the opportunity and were first into space. However, the Multinationals were quick to recover and poured huge resources into the development of space hardware.

The carve-up of the solar system had begun ...



Screen shots from Atari ST version.

FEATURES

1. MONO or COLOUR.
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3. Up to eight ST/AMIGA/PC computers may be connected together using a combination of MIDI and RS232 ports for the multiplayer option.
4. Complex animated objects.
5. Display mode options include
 - (i) Solid graphics.
 - (ii) Full hidden line vector graphics.
6. Players can own a space station, mothership and several other spaceships from cargo shuttles to battle cruisers.
7. All ships have different specifications e.g. max velocity, acceleration, bank/climb rates, weapons capability.
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1. Alternative scenario discs including several which take advantage of extra memory available on some machines.
2. Scenario workshop - create your own solar system and spacecraft using this utility program.

ATARI ST / AMIGA / PC £24.95



Mission Software, Hill House, Middlefield Road, Pitney, Langport,
Somerset TA10 9AH Tel: (0458) 253170

When I first played *Hard Drivin'* on the ST, I found that the controls, via both mouse and joystick, were not to my liking - the mouse was too sensitive and I just didn't like the feel of the joystick for this game. But after a while, I found that the controls were very good, especially the mouse because it makes it easier to skid around the corners and get a faster lap time. I also found that if you made a mistake when taking a corner, you could correct it quicker with the mouse than the joystick. I think that if the steering had been self-centring, it would have been better because, at the moment, you have to keep a constant eye on the steering wheel marker. Domark also boast about new track discs which will have new circuits which I think will improve the game a great deal. On the whole, I think *Hard Drivin'* is a good coin-op conversion and deserves a place in anyones collection, but even more so with the track discs.

AS

When the coin-op hit the streets it was a huge success, largely due to its originality and the hydraulics of the chair, but now it's on your home computer, does it live up to the standard of its arcade parent? The main reason for *Hard Drivin'*'s success was that it was different from all of the other racing games because it had a stunt track which, was there for you to test your skills at jumping off ramps and looping the loop. There was also a challenge in the game which was, to beat the present champion, the Phantom Photon. The job of converting this huge arcade success was given to Jurgen Friedrich, the man who programmed *Star Wars* from his memory of the arcade game! The game was mostly made up of vector graphics, so Jurgen was able to use his experience in that field of graphics and consequently produced some of the best racing-game graphics seen on the ST. All of the

*"Looping the loop in a souped-up sports car with a powerful engine and wide wheels is one of Domark's favourite hobbies. Now it's your chance to do this in *Hard Drivin'*."*

HARD DRIVIN'

DOMARK (£19.95)



The part of the course everybody wants to race around - the loop. You have to be travelling at over 60mph or you won't have enough speed to take you up and over the loop.

arcade's main features are in the conversion: the loop the loop, the jumps, the banked corner and also the cow that 'moos' when you ram into it! You had to drive the car using a steering wheel and a gear stick on the coin-op, but on the conversion you can either use a joystick or mouse for the steering, and either the joystick or keyboard for changing gear.

In both the arcade version as well as

the computer game, you select a manual or automatic gear box. If you select manual, there are five gears in total. You can choose to use the clutch or not, but if you do you are going to have to practice a lot before you become proficient at it and able to change the gear smoothly everytime. Other options include the ability to save your game, and choose whether you want to drive on the left or right-hand side of the track. There are twelve vehicles on the



Your HARD DRIVIN' racer is modelled after a popular sports car but with a more powerful engine and better tyres. Many of the stunts and manoeuvres possible in this game should not be tried in a real car, since that would be extremely dangerous or fatal.

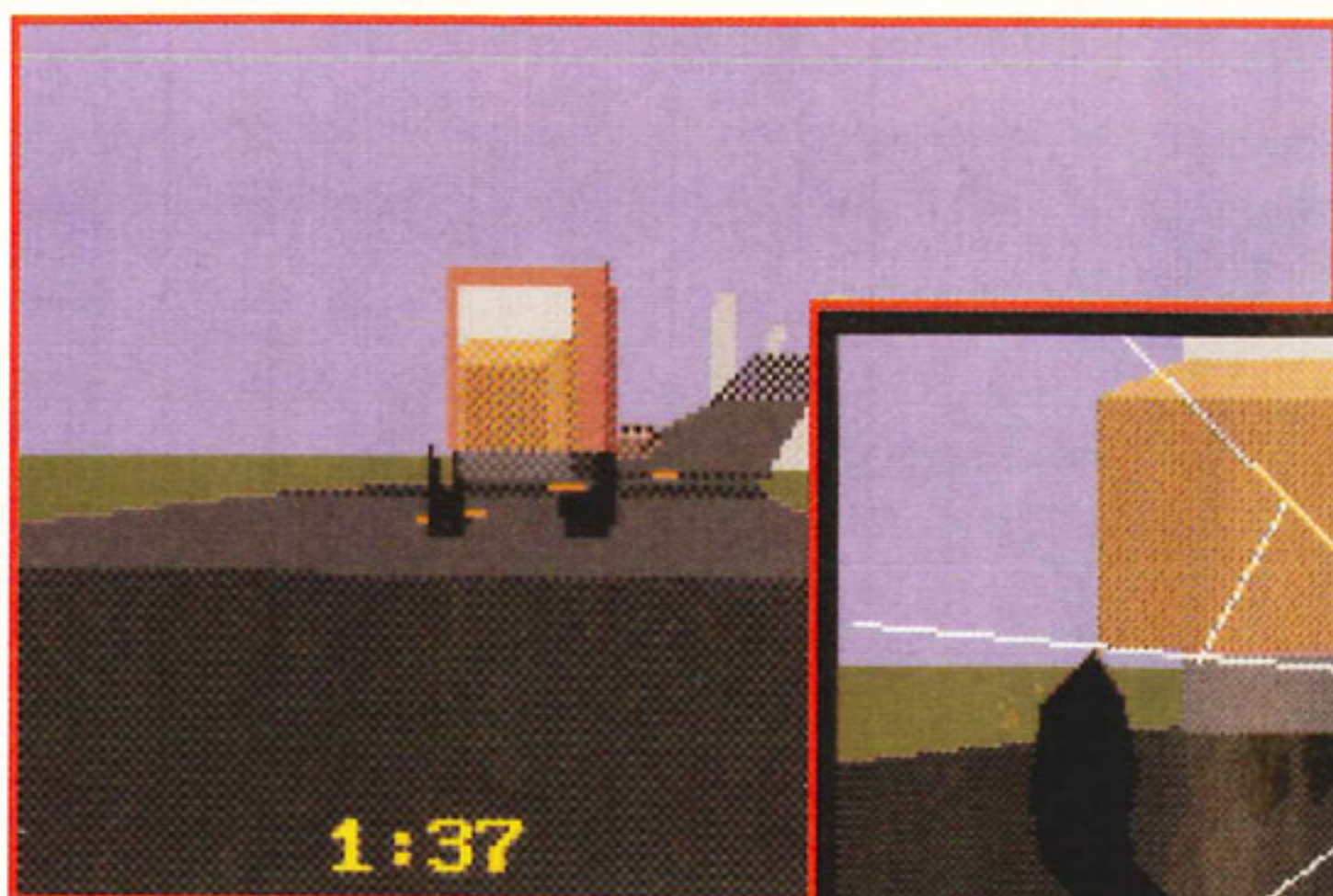
At the beginning of the race, you have to decide whether to race on either the speed or stunt track, the latter being the more difficult.

STA
Rating
72%

GRAPHICS: 70%
SOUND: 47%

LASTING APPEAL: 73%
ADDICTIVENESS: 75%

DIFFICULTY: HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 29000



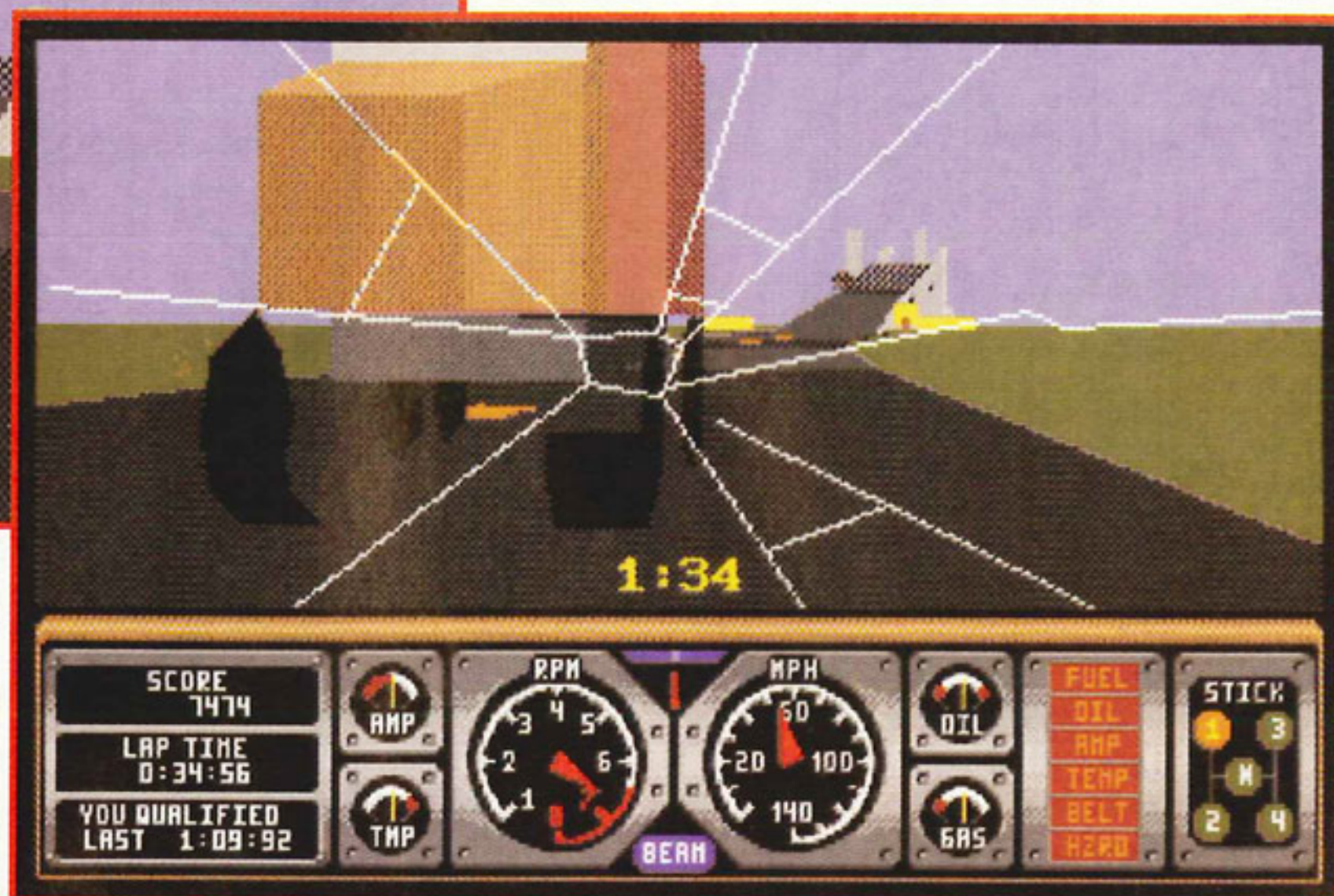
Colliding with another car will seriously damage your car, as well as you. Avoid the truck coming towards you here, otherwise your car will be half the size as it originally was

I have to admit to being a little sceptical as to whether this conversion would be as good as its arcade parent. However, in employing the skills of Jurgen Friedrich, Domark have managed to produce a really close conversion. The game's graphics are well drawn and move very smoothly indeed. I particularly liked the out-of-car shots when you managed to crash the vehicle. The game's sound isn't too impressive: I was really looking forward to hitting the cow and hearing it moo; instead, I was treated to what sounded like a chainsaw. The controls are well implemented, the mouse option probably being the easiest to use. With the added challenge of taking on the Phantom Photon, Hard Drivin' is probably the closest thing to real driving yet to appear.

NC

track, six on the speed track and six on the stunt car track, and the cars are spread around the track so that you should come up against another car every so often. The other cars don't always go in the same direction as you though, because a lot of the time you see a lorry coming towards you, so you either get out of the way or your car is drastically reduced in size.

If you do happen to hit another car, either travelling in the same or opposite



Smooth, fast-moving, solid vector graphics add a third dimension, literally, to the tiring formula of car racing. The background, scrolling road, bridges and other vehicles on the road are an harmonic 3D environment which makes the whole driving experience thoroughly realistic. Undoubtedly, Hard Drivin' is a major surge forward for computer car racing. But, because of the nature of the quick-altering graphics, the steering controls are over responsive - the mouse can be mastered with patience, but the joystick is not even worth considering. The graphics, particularly the other vehicles, are noticeably crude and blocky, especially when compared with sprite-based car racing games, but this is the only sacrifice for the realism. The next advances will be ellipses, greater graphic detail and shading, which will create the ultimate 3D realism. Nevertheless, this is a highly commendable production!

JS

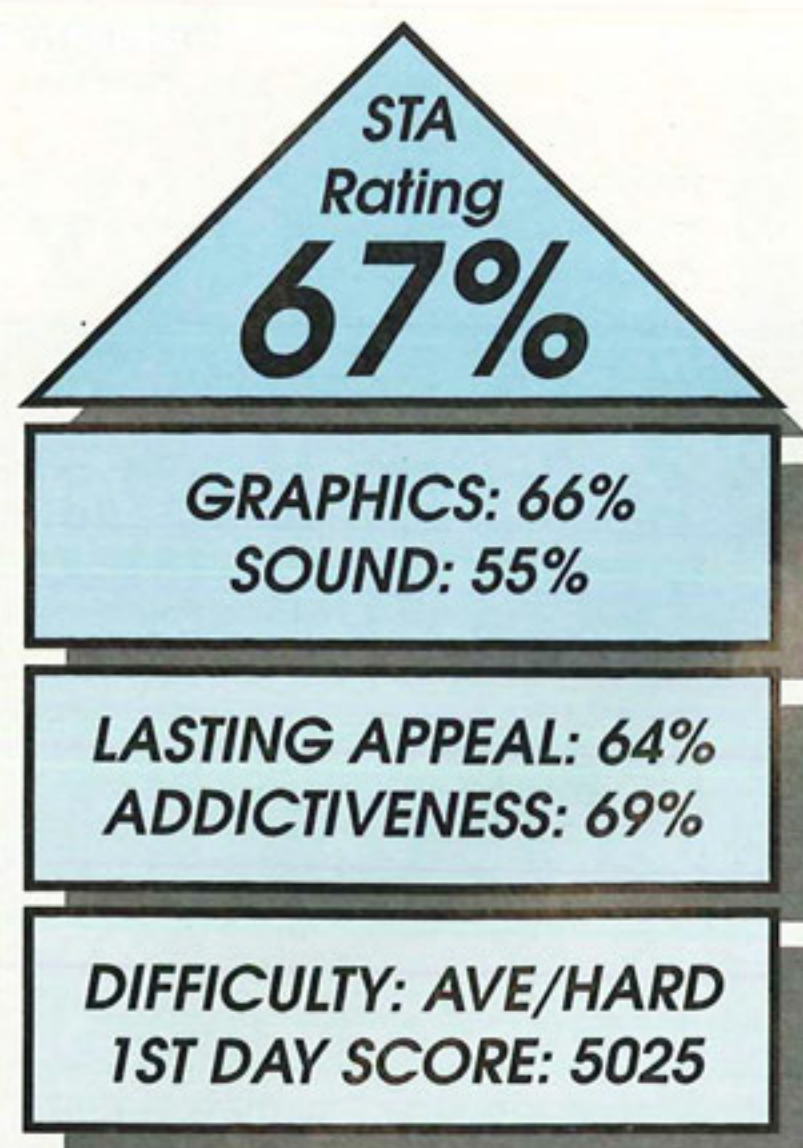
direction as you, the screen will crack and you will come to a halt. The screen will then change to an exterior view, and then show an instant replay of your crash in true 3D. After the crash, you are placed back on the track at one of a number of pre-selected points, whichever is closest. If you do a low lap time, you are challenged by the Phantom Photon, to one lap of the stunt course. If you crash, you are automatically disqualified, thus losing your chance to become the ultimate Hard Driver. On the

other hand, if you win, you can save your lap. Saving the lap will change the Phantom's driving pattern; instead of keeping it the same, he will take the exact driving route of your winning race, so if you have to race the Phantom again, you will be racing yourself. When you're ready to hit the track, slip on your driving gloves, put on your crash helmet and hit that jump at top speed!

STA



In the event of a crash, the computer will show an action replay of an exterior view of the accident. Here, your car has taken the jump too slowly. Falling through the gap, your vehicle crashes onto the track below where it blows-up in a huge ball of flames.



Here, you can see a swarm of bees guarding a fairy. Why not try using the honey found earlier in the level to try and distract them so you can free the imprisoned fairy.



Your mission, should you decide to accept it, is to free the fairy guardians of the realm. Before Badh the crone showed up, the fairies lived in perfect harmony with the realm, which was famed as a place of wonder, peace and beauty. Word of this wonderful realm reached the ears of Badh, so she came to destroy the life force of the land to prevent her body from decaying. She imprisoned the guardian fairies so they couldn't interfere and now she is about to obliterate the whole land. In you come, as Stormlord. You have been requested to free the fairies so they can stop the evil queen in her tracks. To aid you, the great, Mael Ovin, has been commanded to help carry you around the world, thus avoiding all of the nasties on the ground.

You control Stormlord, and using the joystick, you make him jump, walk, duck and fire at the enemy. As you stroll around the realm, you will come across a number of creatures, including huge worms that attempt to devour you, or eggs that drop down from the sky and crack as they hit the ground, releasing blue demons in search of a tasty meal - in the form of you. Throughout your quest, you will have to solve simple puzzles with objects that you find. For instance, if a swarm of giant bees are impeding your progress and you want to lure them out of the way, why not try using honey? Giant springs are scattered around on the floor, waiting for someone like you to step on them. When you do, they catapult you into

"A fairy lies before you, imprisoned in a bubble. As Stormlord, you must free all of the fairy folk before they are destroyed and the whole world becomes evil."

STORMLORD

HEWSON (£24.99)

the air, with the ground far out of sight. The springs are there to aid you, not to kill you though, so don't bother about jumping over them, jump on them.



Around the realm, there are a number of things that can transport you: an eagle, for instance. Stepping on the spring seen here, will catapult you high into the air and down into another part of the level.

At the end of each level you enter a sub-game where, to gain an extra life, you have to collect at least ten fairy tears. To make them drop tears, you have to blow kisses at them, which makes them fall in love with you (ahhh). So if you think you can handle the secret love affairs of a Stormlord, hurry down to your local computer store because the fairies are counting on you.

STA

Two strong Hewson releases in one month may seem excessive, but Onslaught and Stormlord are setting this talented company back on the right track. Stormlord's dark, mysterious and atmospheric backdrops play host to a supreme arcade adventure which is a combination of taxing puzzles and nonstop dodging and firing action. Impressive and changeable artwork runs throughout the game and the main character sprites are very well animated. All in all, this is a slick game with plenty of entertainment in store for fans of this traditional style of arcade entertainment, which is all the better for being staged in a state-of-the-art, sprite-based environment - one of the best of its kind!

JS

Released at the same time as Hewson's other fantasy arcade adventure, Onslaught, Stormlord has a few extra touches making it the better of the two. Stormlord has some very nice graphics: colourful, well drawn and well animated. The backdrops are of a good standard, with some of the background being animated, like the large fairies' hair blowing in the wind. The game's sound is good too, with either a catchy tune playing along with the action, or sound effects if you don't like it. There are some good ideas that have been well done, such as the way you fly through the air when you jump on a spring. It's very easy to play as well, but one fault I did find that let the whole game down, was that the game was far too repetitive. Stormlord would have been far better game if a few extra levels had been added, just one different level would have been welcome. I think that if these changes were made, Stormlord would be a good game, but as it is, it's just your average, run-of-the-mill platform adventure.

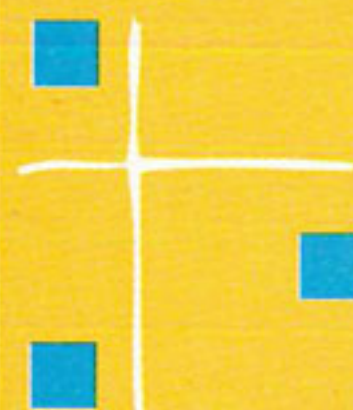
AS



STAR

AMIGA

The Games
machine



**STAR
PLAYER**

• NORTH & SOUTH •



CHAAARGE !!! Dive into the hilarious world of the Belgium comic book "LES TUNIKUES BLEUES" (CAUVIN & LAMBIL). For one or two players, you are either Yankee or Confederate, so re-

creating the true atmosphere of the American Civil War. NORTH & SOUTH, an original, explosive cocktail of strategy and arcade. Surround your enemy using the strategic map of the American East Coast. Crush them on the super arcade battle field. Send your best men to stop the gold-filled trains, and then rush the forts to free the enemy occupied towns. NORTH & SOUTH, a game filled with options. Start the game from a

choice of four different years, three levels of difficulty and a special disaster mode which includes violent storms stopping all movement of troops, re-inforcements arriving from Europe, and not forgetting the Indians and Mexicans whose only pleasure in life is attacking you!

If that wasn't enough to wet your appetite, you can also choose between a "strategy-only" game and an "strategy-arcade game", and with the superb 2 players version that has to be played to be believed, it only leaves us to give the order "To your sabres!!"



LES TUNIKUES BLEUES ©
CAUVIN-LAMBIL. DUPUIS.

Available on AMIGA, ATARI ST 2 DISKS, PC compatibles 2 DISKS.

INFOGRAAMES



I thought that the animated sprites of the actual characters were well drawn and held a very strong resemblance to the characters. I especially liked the way Snoopy's ears flew up in the air when he jumped off something and the way the frog's eyes bulged out so that when it was in the jam jar all you could see was this pair of bulging eyes. The tune is not too bad either but if you don't like it you can switch it off and listen to the sound effects instead. In a Peanut shell (ha ha...) I think this game deserves to be in anyone's collection if you enjoy this type of game, but otherwise you should try playing it before spending your hard-earned cash.

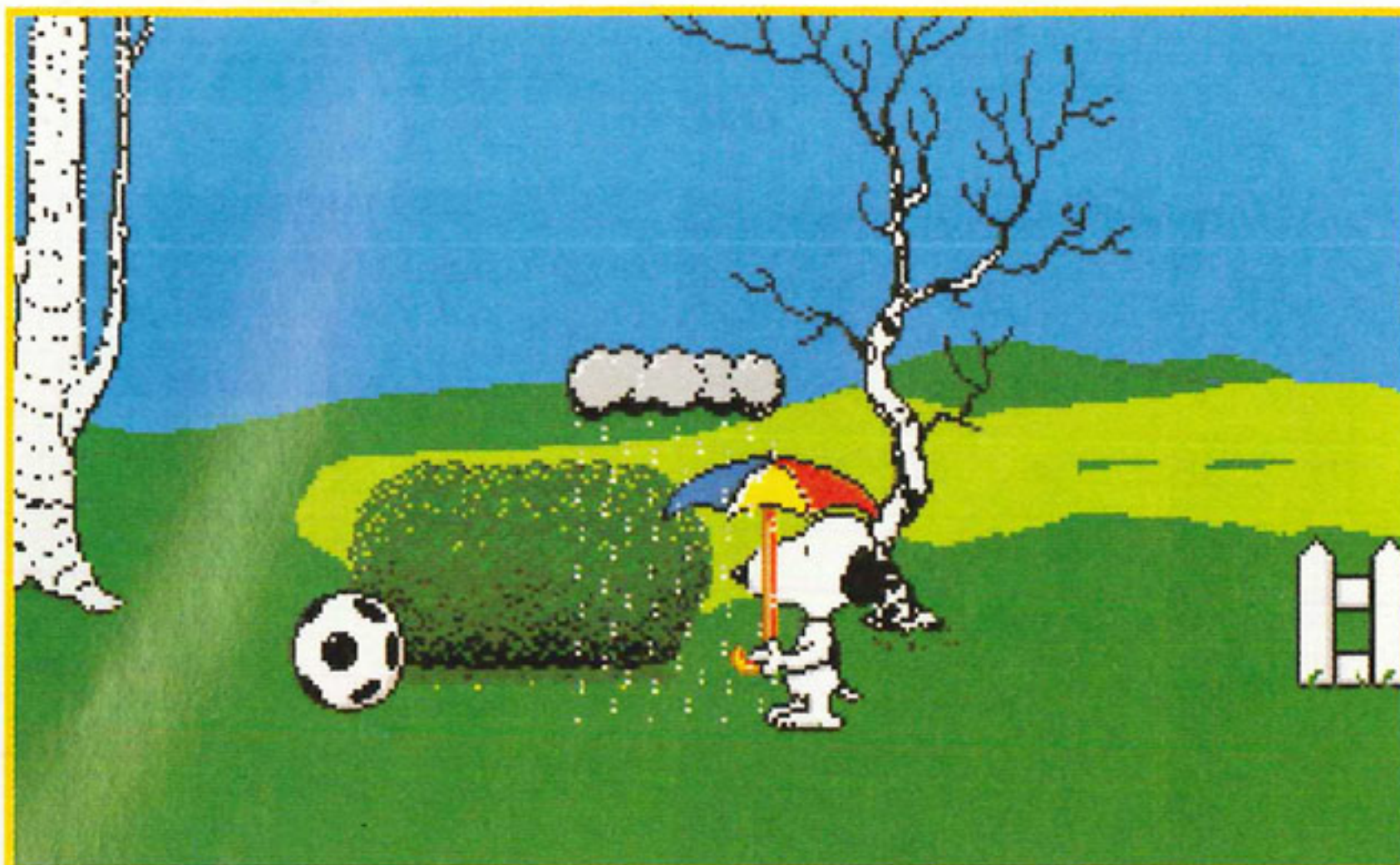
AS

First Garfield, now Peanuts - The Edge appear to have made the theme of cult cartoon games their own. Again, the cartoon characterizations look and move just like their celluloid counterparts and the backdrops are typical scenes from the cartoon, but this time the pick-up-object-and-find-a-use-for-it gameplay has been noticeably improved. But cute characters alone maketh not the game! The most noticeable fault with Snoopy is the slow, somewhat somnolent, pace to the game which fails to excite. Again, excellent characterization, but the game itself would appeal more to a younger age group who will appreciate the joy of actually being able to control Snoopy.

JS

I'm sure most of you have seen the Peanuts cartoon on television and if, like me, you enjoyed the fun and frolics of Snoopy and the gang I'm certain that this game is your cup of tea. Playing the part of the megastar beagle himself, it's your job to bring Linus back to life and to do this you have to find his precious blanket. You have to venture around the local

One of the problems during the game is a particularly mean rain cloud that hinders your progress to get the football, but once you have the umbrella, you can put a stop to the overgrown marshmallow.



"Why not step into Snoopy's shoes and say 'hello' to Charlie Brown and the rest of the peanuts gang in The Edge's Snoopy, the cool computer game."

SNOOPY

THE EDGE (£19.99)

neighbourhood guiding Joe Cool via the joystick - pushing up to jump, pulling down to pick up various objects and pressing the fire button to examine something. It is possible to guide Snoopy around Charlie Brown's house as well as the school, other houses and around the local parks and streets. To find the blanket you will have to use all the ingenuity at your disposal as well as experimenting with different objects to find the solution to certain puzzles. There is one catch, though: you only have forty-five minutes (real time) to find and collect the blanket. To find out your score you can either look at the score board at the park or pick up a watch and, by using it, Snoopy will tell you the time through a speech bubble. As well as Snoopy and Charlie Brown, there are

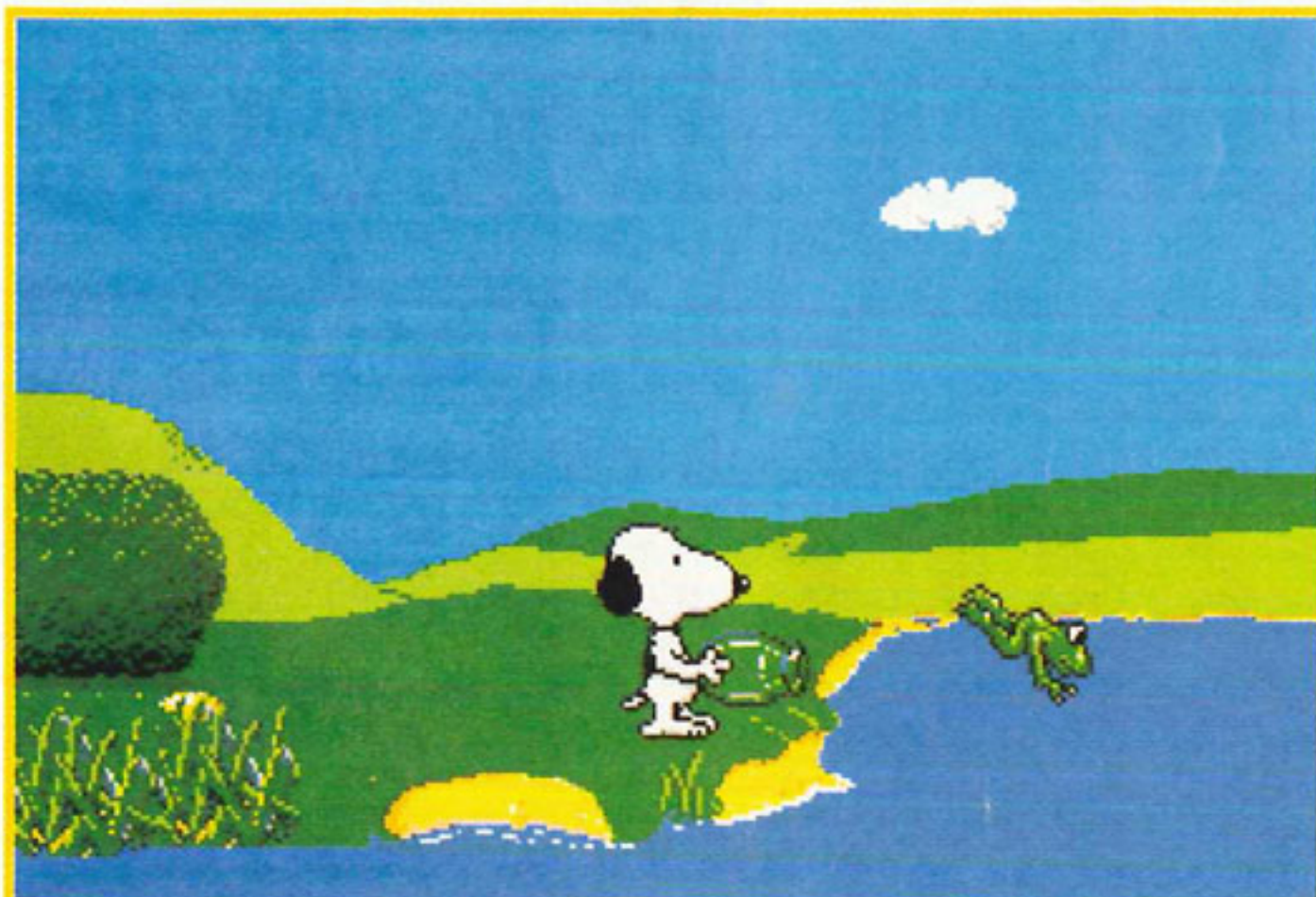
Woodstock, Lucy, Peppermint Patty and of course, Linus.

In creating this game, The Edge had the close co-operation of the people responsible for Peanuts, which ensured that the graphics had greater authenticity.

Throughout the game there are many puzzles to solve and Snoopy is in the same mould as the adventures of Garfield, so anyone familiar with them will know how to play this game without any problems, but even if you haven't played them the game is very user-friendly so you can get into it straight away.

STA

Trying to catch this frog is easier than it looks. All you have to do is tilt the jar on its side and in it goes.



STA
Rating

63%

GRAPHICS: 56%
SOUND: 45%

LASTING APPEAL: 70%
ADDICTIVENESS: 60%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

NO MERCY-NO SURRENDER

A NEW 3D DUO FROM LOGOTRON ENTERTAINMENT

BAD COMPANY...

You've fallen into Bad Company. In this place there are no good guys, just you, your sidekick and wave upon wave of insectoid enemies who have just one thing in mind - the total destruction of every human they set their nasty little bug eyes on. No quarter is asked and none is given, you know what to do - if it's alien, blast it!

Bad Company is programming legend Steve Bak's latest and greatest masterwork with scrolling of vanishing point perspective surfaces, the latest superfast 3D sprite techniques and featuring:

- Simultaneous two-player option
- Unique choice of weaponry, with fire power boosters
- Choice of eight different combat heroes
- Uncountable waves of sickening insectoid attack

ATARI ST & COMMODORE AMIGA
END NOVEMBER '89. PRICE £24.99



STAR-BLAZE...

StarBlaze is pure solid vector 3D Shoot 'em Up from the programmers that brought you 16 bit Elite! To qualify as a Tamsinian warrior in an intergalactic war of unparalleled ferocity, you must prove your prowess by taking on scores of fiendish alien attack waves and live to tell the tale. How will you do it? With quick reactions and the fastest trigger finger on the planet!

StarBlaze is a game which draws upon the strongest features of the classic arcade titles to introduce a wholly original style of game to the arcade genre, featuring:

- Over a hundred different attack patterns
- Action-packed gameplay in stunning solid 3D
- Five colourful backdrops (forget boring starfields)
- Shield, smart bomb and extra power pickups

ATARI ST & COMMODORE AMIGA
END OCTOBER '89. PRICE £19.99



LOGOTRON ENTERTAINMENT

CHANCERY HOUSE, 107 ST PAULS ROAD, LONDON N1 2HA

The Logotron name and mark are used under license from Logotron Limited.

CHAMBERS OF SHAOLIN

STA
Rating
67%

GRAPHICS: 60%
SOUND: 57%

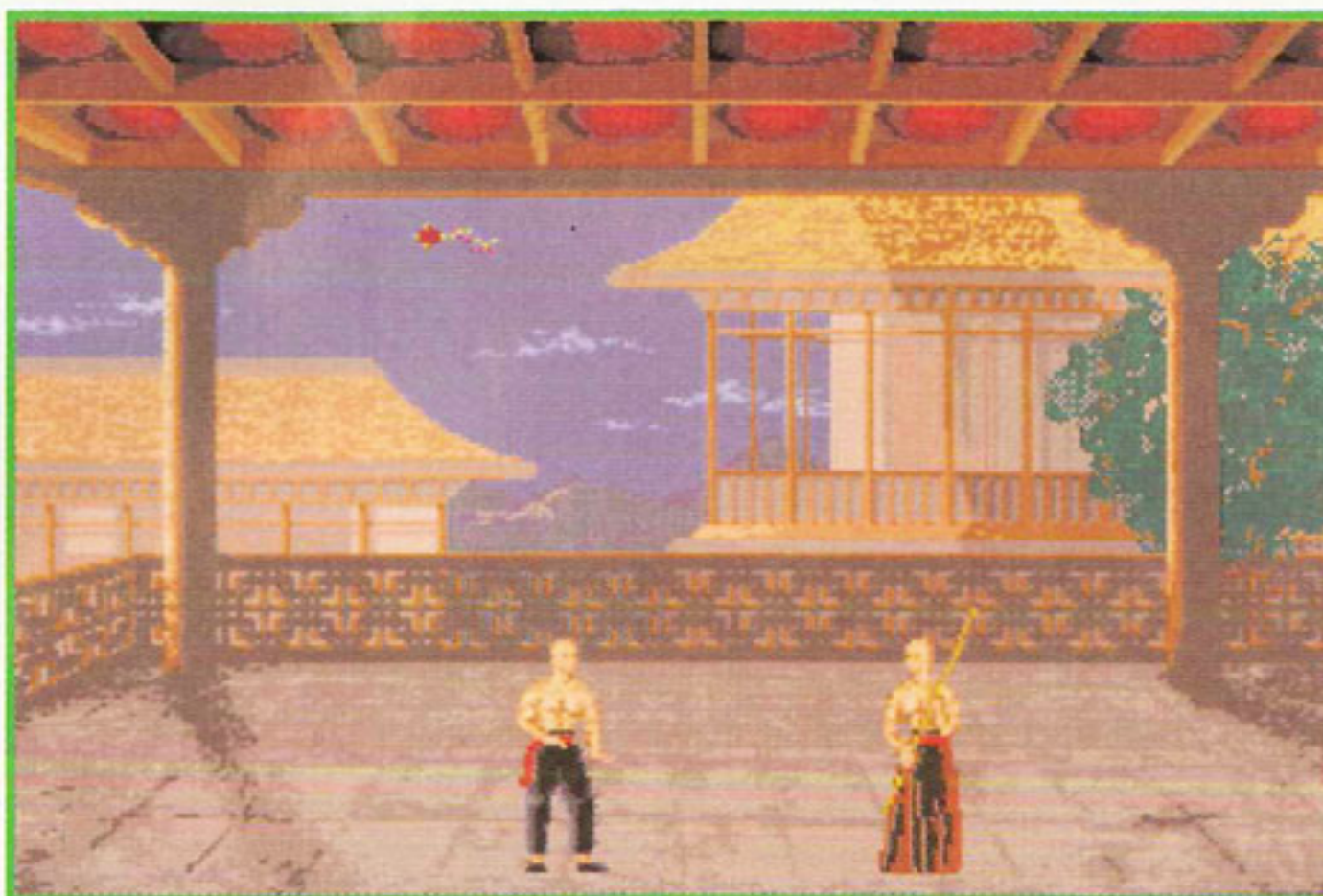
LASTING APPEAL: 67%
ADDICTIVENESS: 66%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

No doubt most of you have played a game of an oriental style, be it International Karate + or Lords of the Rising Sun. Lately, quite a few beat 'em-ups have been released, but now it's the turn of Grandslam to put their game, Chambers of Shaolin up for grabs. To actually fight in Shaolin, you first have to create a character by attending training lessons by your master. There are six different tests, or chambers as they are otherwise known. The first chamber is called 'The test of the stick'. Here you see a side-on view of you and a man wielding a large stick. It's your job to dodge his blows, either by ducking or jumping. He will strike low, in the middle or to the head. To avoid head shots, you simply duck, and to dodge both low and middle shots you have to leap out of

"Before you can be a master at Martial Arts, you have to practise, and why not start practising with Grandslam's Chambers of Shaolin."

GRANDSLAM (£19.99)



In the first chamber, your master is trying to knock you senseless and so you have to avoid his blows without returning his attacks.

the way. You keep on doing this until your master hits you ten times, when the chamber is over and the game will tell you how well you've done. The next chamber is a test of agility, and to do this you have to avoid incoming objects. To dodge these you have a variety of moves, ranging from a back-flip to ducking underneath the item. To start off with, you get a full complement of energy measured as a percentage. Each time you are hit by an object, it knocks off some of your energy and when you run out, it is the end of the test. Once again, the computer measures your progress and it's on to the next chamber, the test of balance.

Four poles are in front of you, and on one of these poles is a sign you have to collect by jumping from one pole to another. When you reach the sign, a new one will appear on another pole, and you have to go and fetch it. You have three attempts in which to collect as many signs as you can. After this, your master tests your speed by trying to drown you. You stand in the middle of a room which is gradually filling up with water, and by kicking a large ball in the centre of the room you can release two axes which cut the rope suspending the covers that stop the water from flowing in. If the water reaches your feet, it is the end of the test. Now it's



When you've got a dozen things on screen at once, it's not that easy to dodge them all, but that is what you have to do on the second test.

I wasn't particularly amazed at the Chambers of Shaolin because nothing was notably good: neither the graphics, sound nor game-play. It hasn't broken any records in originality either, because although the training is different, I have seen many games that feature martial arts and I am now getting to the point where I think "Oh no... not another one." I found that having to complete the training to get a decent character became more of a chore than something you could enjoy. I think that if I went out and bought a copy of Shaolin, I would be going back to play on my old copy of International Karate. I'm sorry, Grandslam, but I think there are better games on the market.

AS

A good martial-arts combat game can yield the most absorbing two-player action, and I must admit to being a real fan of this type of game. However, although Shaolin is the latest in a long line of combat games, it really is nothing new as it derives the majority of its content and presentation from the likes of ST Karate and International Karate and their ilk. The main sprites look more realistic than their fighting predecessors and the animation and joystick control are equally as smooth. But there is one thing seriously missing - any real improvement! There is more emphasis on tests than on two-player participation. Some of these tests are certainly ingenious but there is no substitute for knocking seven bells out of each other. There was a glut of combat games, but this is the first for quite some time - check it out!

JS

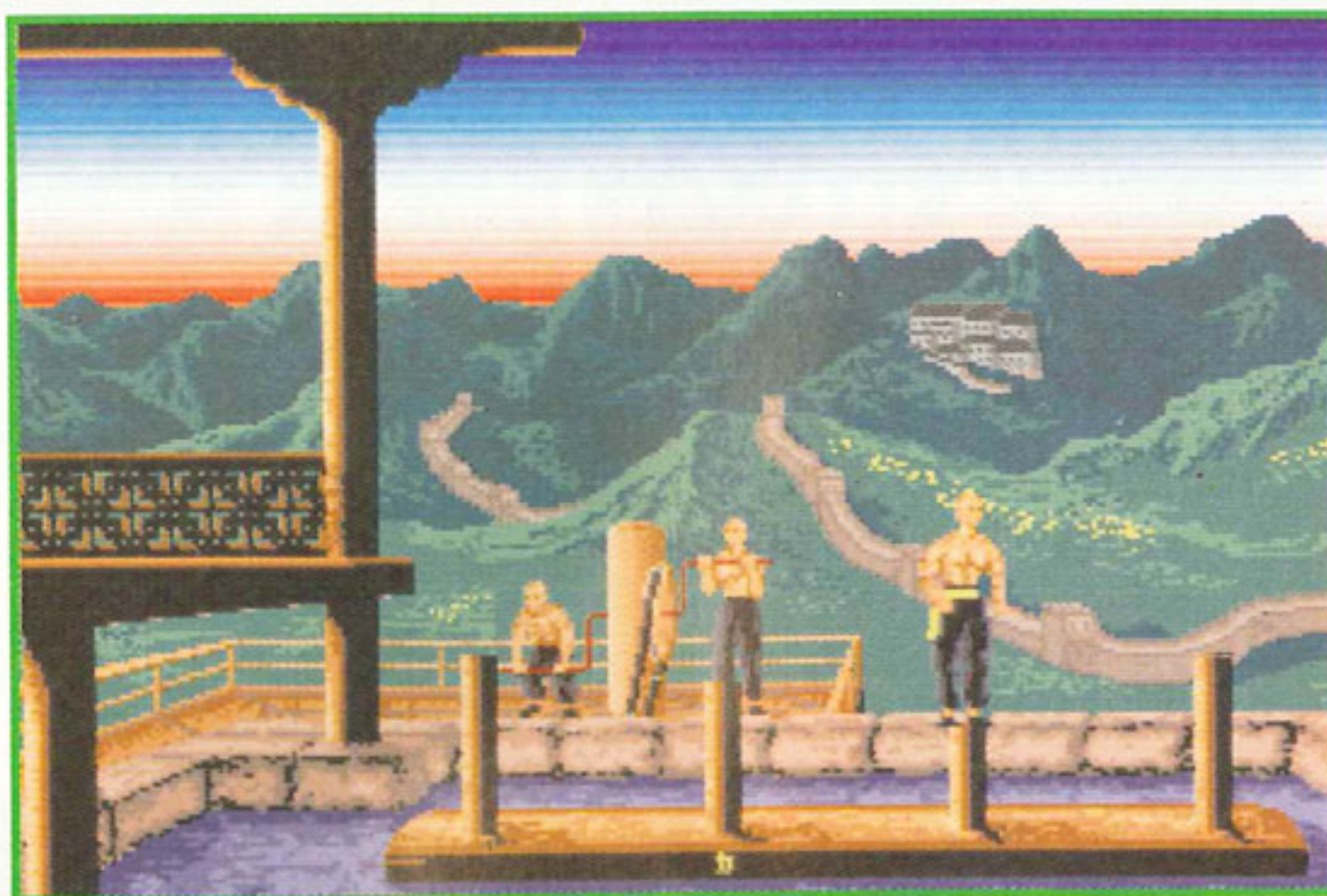
The best place to position your hand is in the centre of the board, then you have to waggle the joystick like mad to build up your strength, ready to smash the board in half.



the chamber that most people relate martial arts with, seeing how many boards you can smash in half with your hand. First you have to position your hand over the board, then you have to waggle the joystick to build up your strength and, finally, smash the board. The more boards you break, the stronger you are. The last test sees you standing on a bridge, with

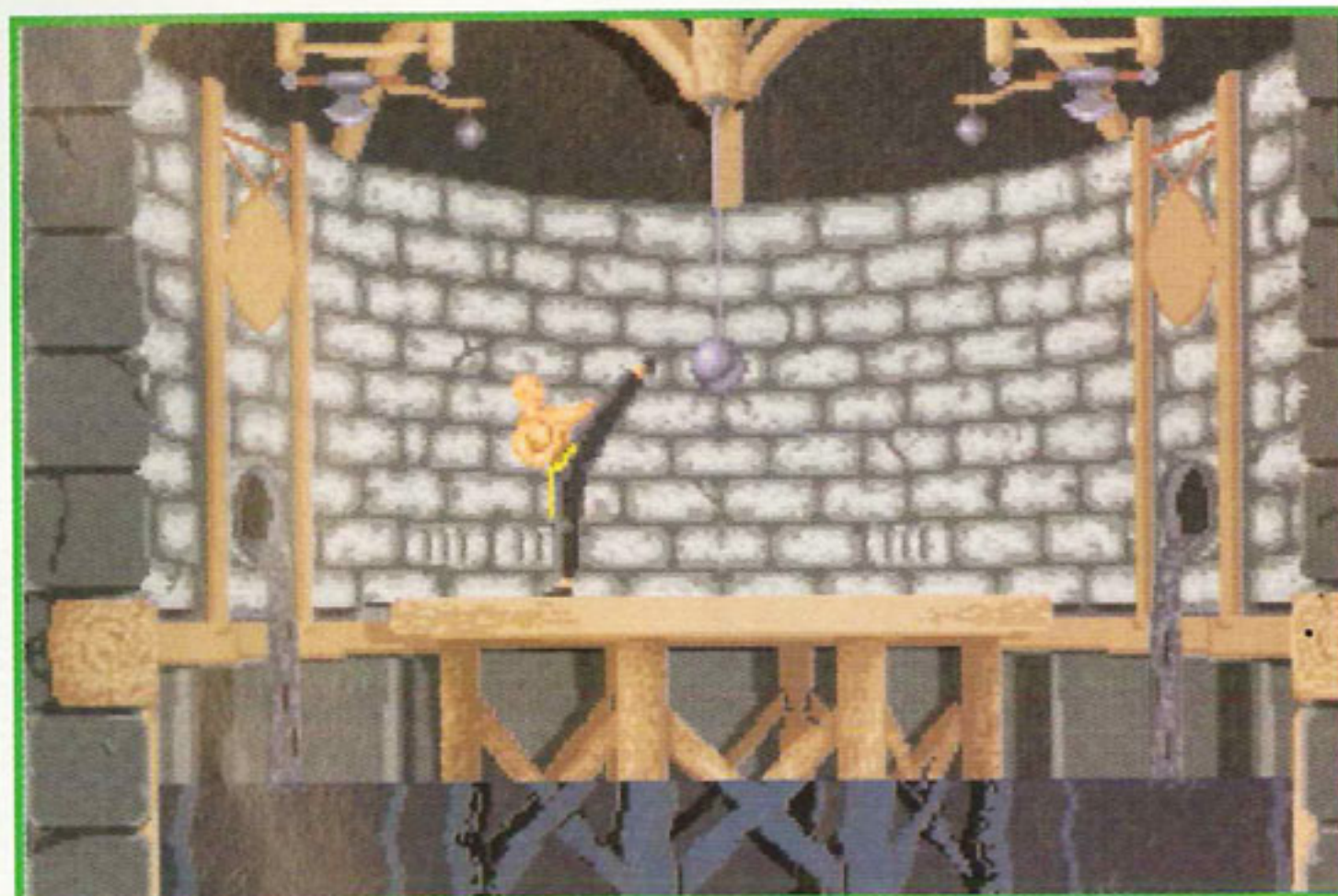
I know you've all probably got some sort of martial arts game by now, but before you dismiss Chambers of Shaolin as just another beat'em-up, wait! The emphasis of this game isn't just on fighting. Oh no, in Chambers of Shaolin you have to train a character first. The various exercises are all well thought out and the actual fighting sequence is good. The game's graphics are typically oriental and nicely detailed. However, it is the game's music the really impressed me. I also liked the feature whereby I could convert my character to run on my friend's Amiga. All in all, Chambers of Shaolin is a great little beat'em-up that has a whole lot more to offer than usual.

NC



You have to be very steady on your feet in this test, because if you're not, you're likely to come a cropper.

High kicks are the name of the game here. Hit the ball enough times and the pipes at either side of the screen will be blocked by the covers suspended above.



your master sitting in a tiny boat on the river. He throws burning baskets up onto the bridge, and to survive you have to avoid them and also sweep-kick the remaining ones off of the bridge. Once you have completed all of the tests, the computer tells you if you were successful or not; but either way, you have the choice of saving your character and going on to fight or you can quit and try and make a better man.

If you choose to fight, you have to

defeat a number of opponents before you become an expert, or you can have a two-player game instead that puts your generated character against your opponents. If you think you can earn yourself a black belt, jump into your robes and show them what you're made of.

STA



The test puts you on a bridge, with flaming baskets being lobbed at you. To survive, you have to kick the baskets off the bridge and also avoid all of the incoming ones at the same time.

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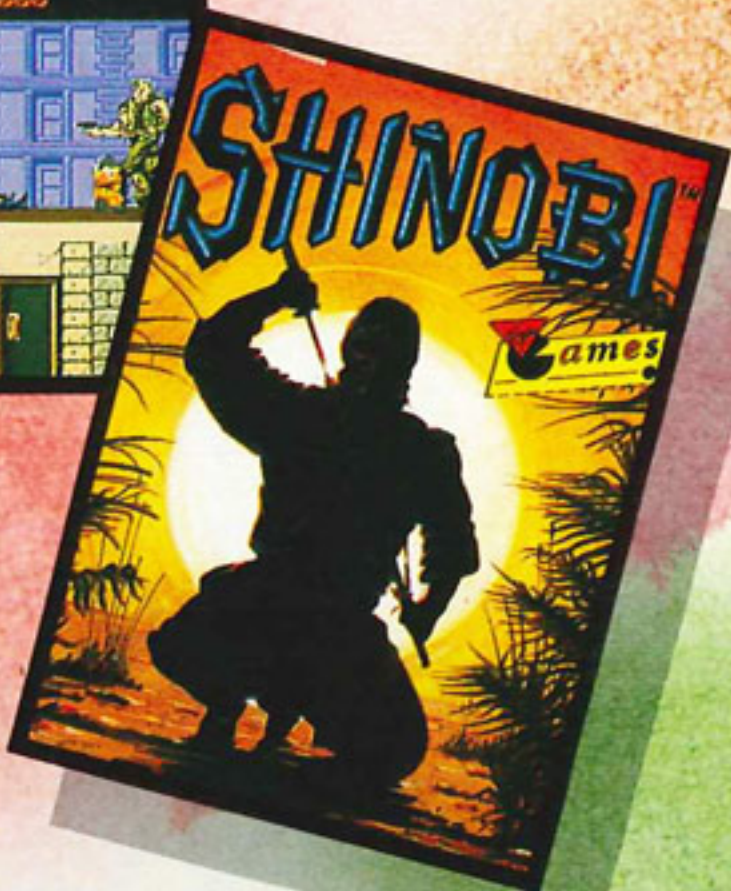
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Compete in formula one races in Brazil, America, France, Monaco, Germany, Spain and Japan. Race hard, but watch out for other cars. Colliding can be fatal. And do visit the pits for fuel and repairs.



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Can you survive brutal enemy onslaught? Fight with hand, foot and dagger to rid the street of the scum that dare infest your home town. A classic arcade conversion.



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Ferocious two-player simultaneous martial arts mayhem. Evil fiends have captured your girlfriend - it's up to you and your brother to rescue her. Don't fail. Through the town, countryside, mountains and finally into the lair. Use whatever weapons you can find to stay alive.

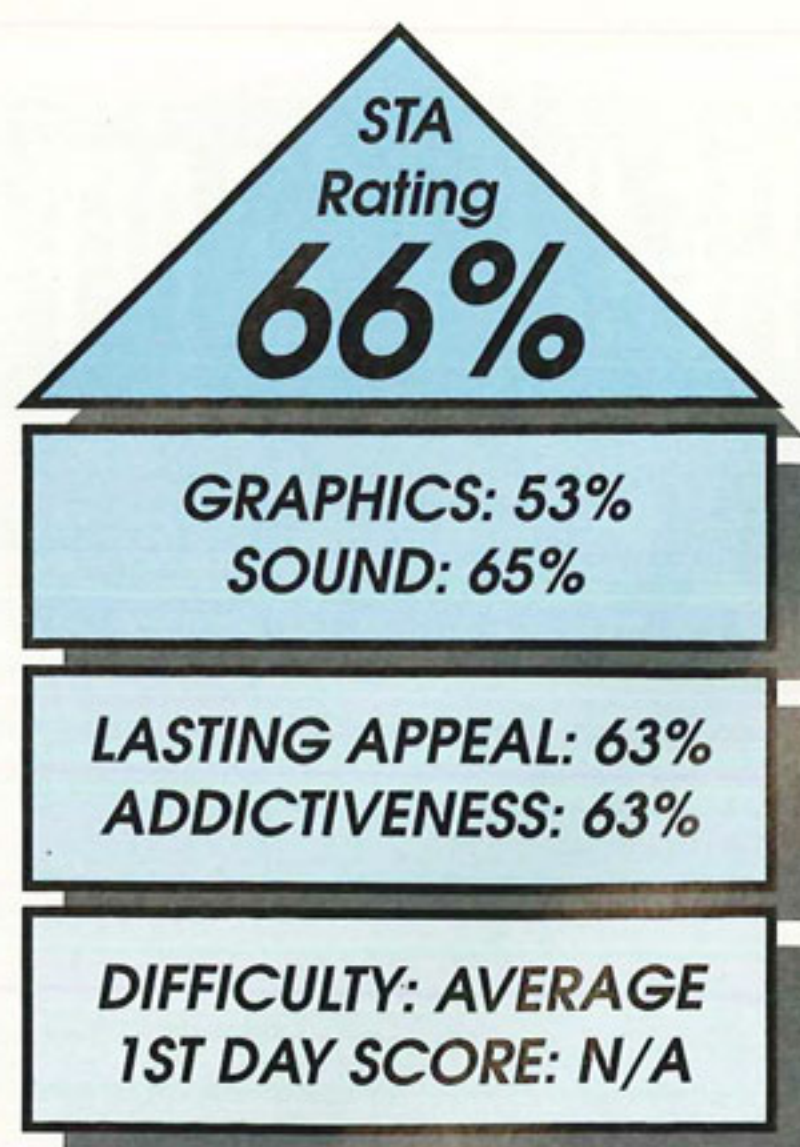


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Don't you look sweet with your pixie hat and your robes? Chant the words of a certain magic spell you know and you'll be able to wipe the monster off the face of your monitor screen.



"Dress up in your best robes and become the apprentice of a great wizard. Armed only with your petty magic, you have to go and find the seven parts of the wizard's wand in order to escape from the Seven Gates of Jambala."

SEVEN GATES OF JAMBALA

GRANDSLAM (£19.99)

Hubble, bubble, toil and trouble! Casting magic is not one of my strong points, but the apprentice wizard that you control via the joystick seems to be pretty good at it. This is the sort of cute platform game that youngsters like to buy, but don't let that put you off. Jambala puts you in the trousers of the mage apprentice that has to go in search of seven parts of a wand and on completion you are free to leave the through the gates of Jambala.

Jambala is an arcade adventure/platform romp where you can jump, cast magic missiles and even fly around in a bubble. Your magic ranges from really puny pixie

dust, which is what you start off with, up to a very strong blasting ball which roles across the screen. You have five lives in total, but each of these lives is divided into another five lives, so in actual fact you have a massive twenty-five lives. Everytime you bump into a monster, you lose one of your sub-lives, but falling into the water forfeits one of your precious five lives. Along the way, there are friendly and evil creatures. The evil creatures attack you, but the friendly ones help you by offering you an item of interest or some useful information, but both of these usually have a high price. The way to earn the gold, is to acquire, either by killing a monster or buying (only if you have money in the first place) a hammer. By hitting the hammer on the ground, you can gain money as it jumps up, ready to be caught. Also other bonuses, like extra lives, can be gained in this way. On most levels there is a tower where you have to enter from the bottom and make your way to the top. It's worth spending some time in

these rooms because they usually hold a lot of money. Once you have collected all of the parts of the wand by destroying each of the end-of-level guardians, you can find the exit and attempt to escape. This is where the information you hopefully bought earlier comes in handy. You have to slot each of the seven different coloured pieces into the wand in the correct order and, if you manage it, you are free to go.

STA

The Seven Gates of Jambala is a nice game, because it's easy to get into: no reading lengthy manuals here. The graphics are like so many others and take on the 'cute' look of computer sprites, but some of the nasties do look mean (the large dragon that stretches out on the floor is particularly big and bad!). Throughout the game, there are plenty of power-ups, as well as an assortment of extra lives and bouncy boots, so you won't get spoilt for choice. There are quite a few games of this type on the market at the moment and before you go out and buy Jambala, I suggest you look around and ask to play it first.

AS



When you have reached the end of your quest and found each of the pieces of the wand, you have to place them together in the correct order.

As well as the sudden influx of racing games, cute platform-style games are also making something of a revival. Grandslam's Seven Gates of Jambala is just one of several similar games to appear just lately but, for me, it has something extra. Graphically the game is very well presented, the well drawn back-drops and the nicely animated end-of-level monsters being particularly memorable. The sound is also exceptional. Instead of incorporating one catchy tune, Jambala has loads of them. The gameplay is simple yet addictive and the game holds a long-lasting challenge to platform fans. All in all, Seven Gates of Jambala is a standard platform romp that's been polished near to perfection.

NC

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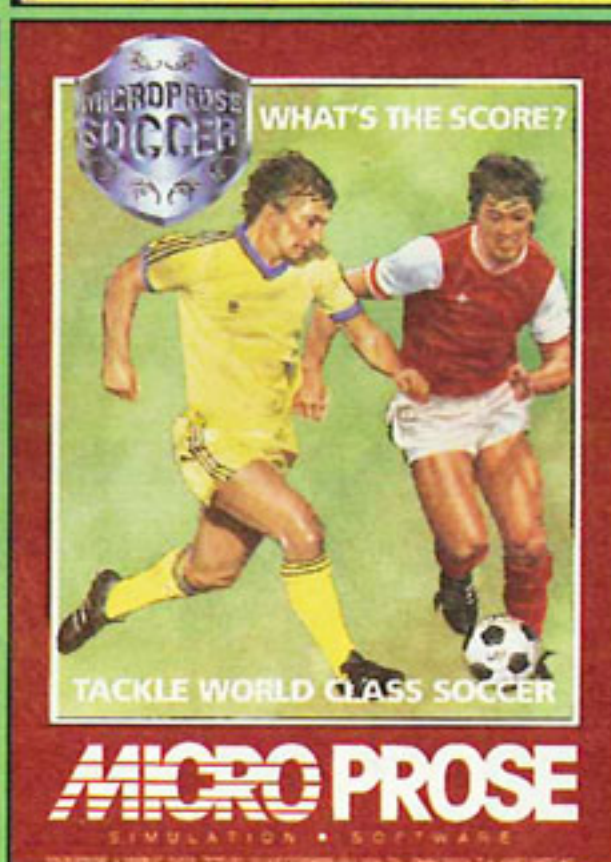
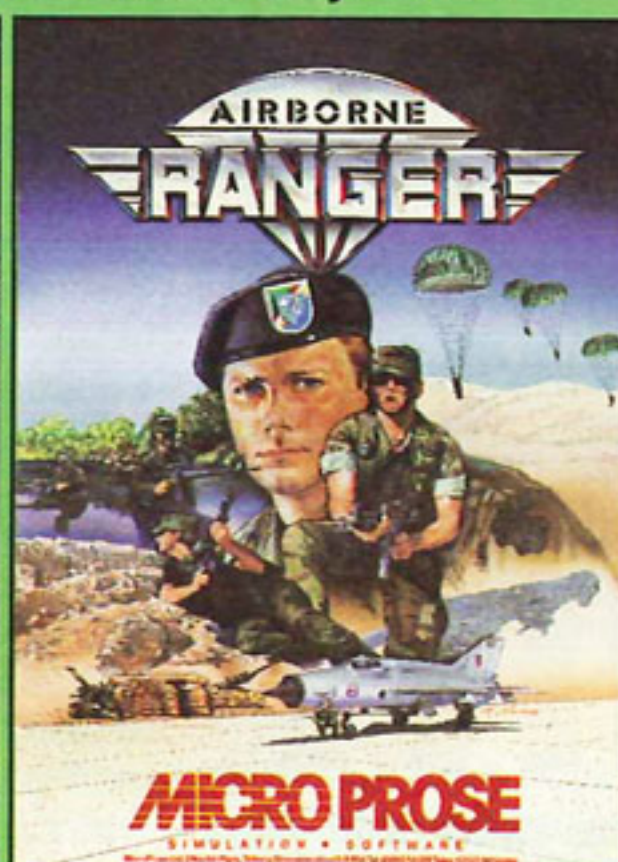
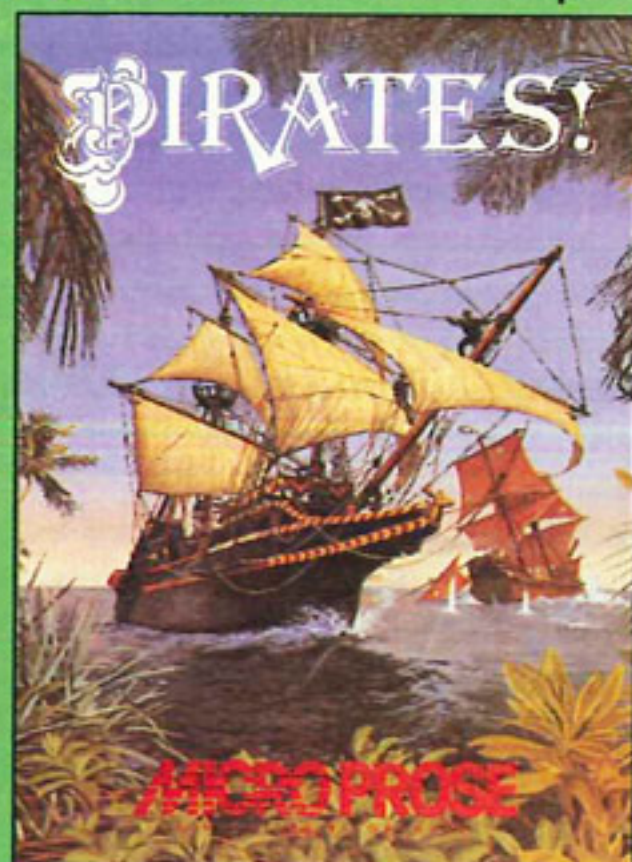
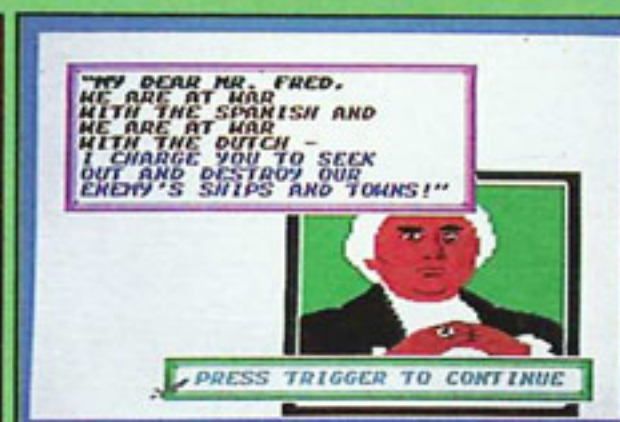
MicroProse's action games feature a depth of realism, excitement and strategy rarely seen before in computer entertainment.

TWO SCORE GOLD PIECES

Pirates, played by over a quarter of a million square miles, offers unparalleled gameplay and adventure on the high seas;

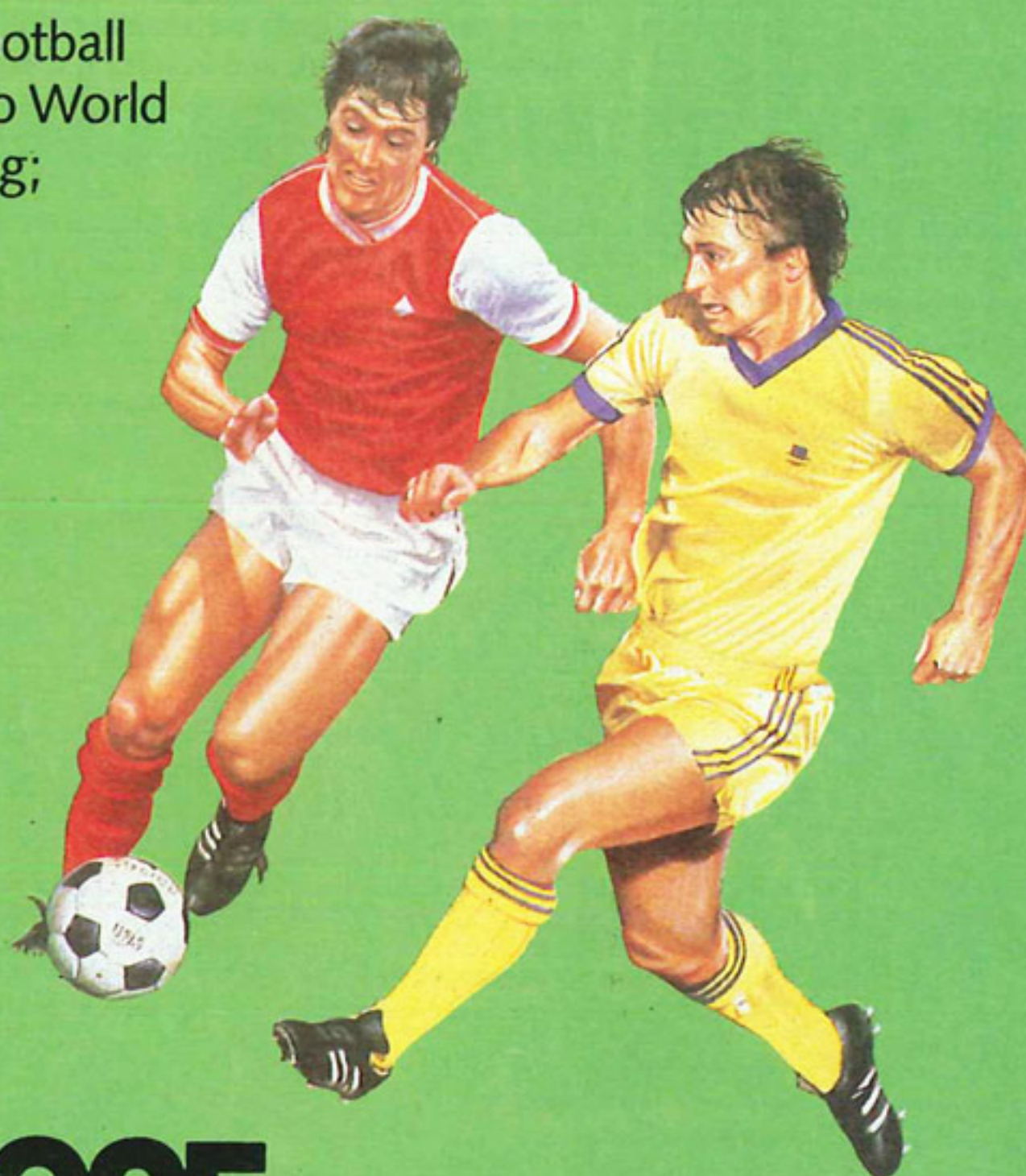
SCORE TO SETTLE

Airborne Ranger's fast-paced action challenges your skills and reflexes over a dozen missions deep behind enemy lines.



WHAT'S THE SCORE?

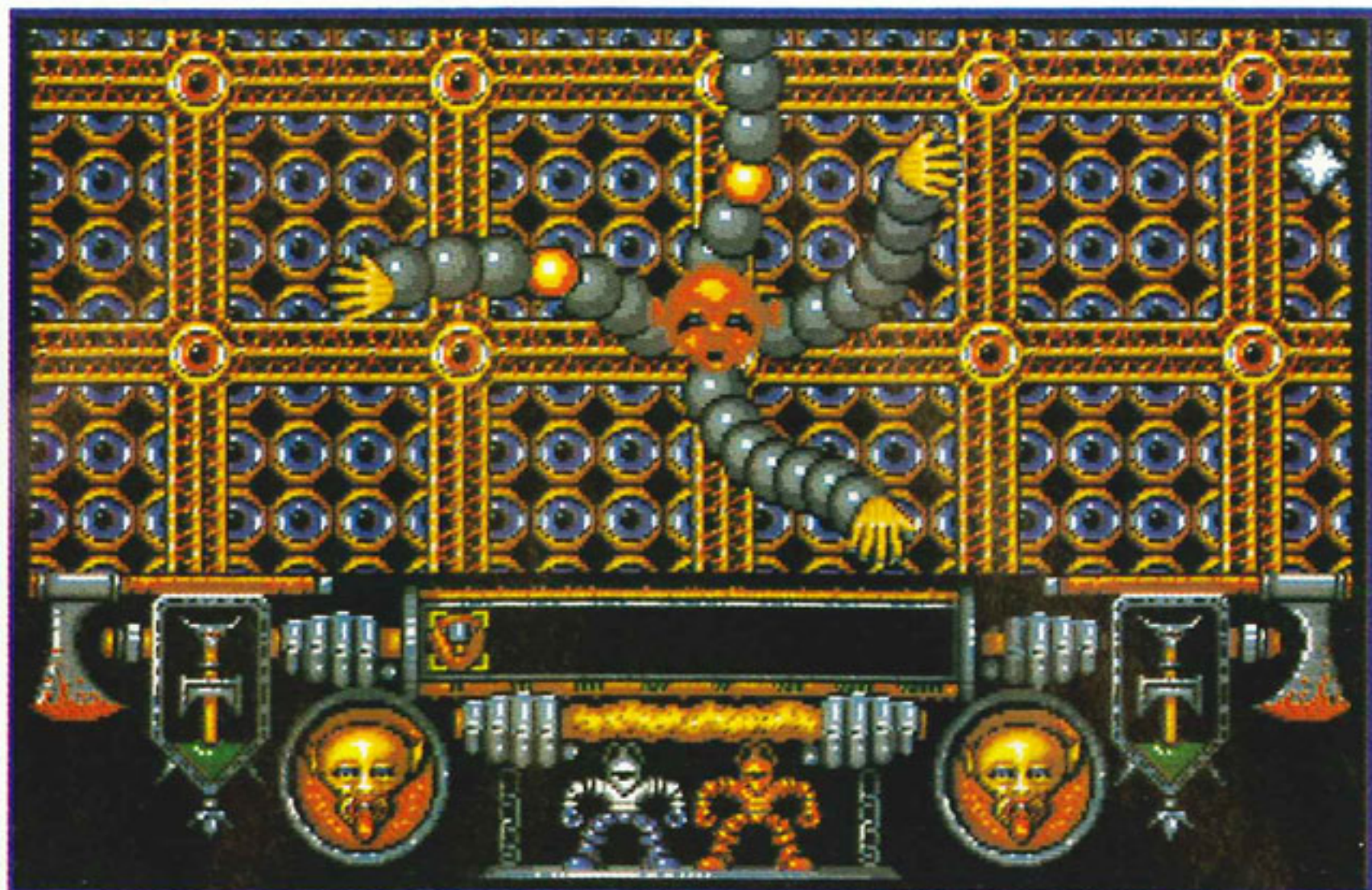
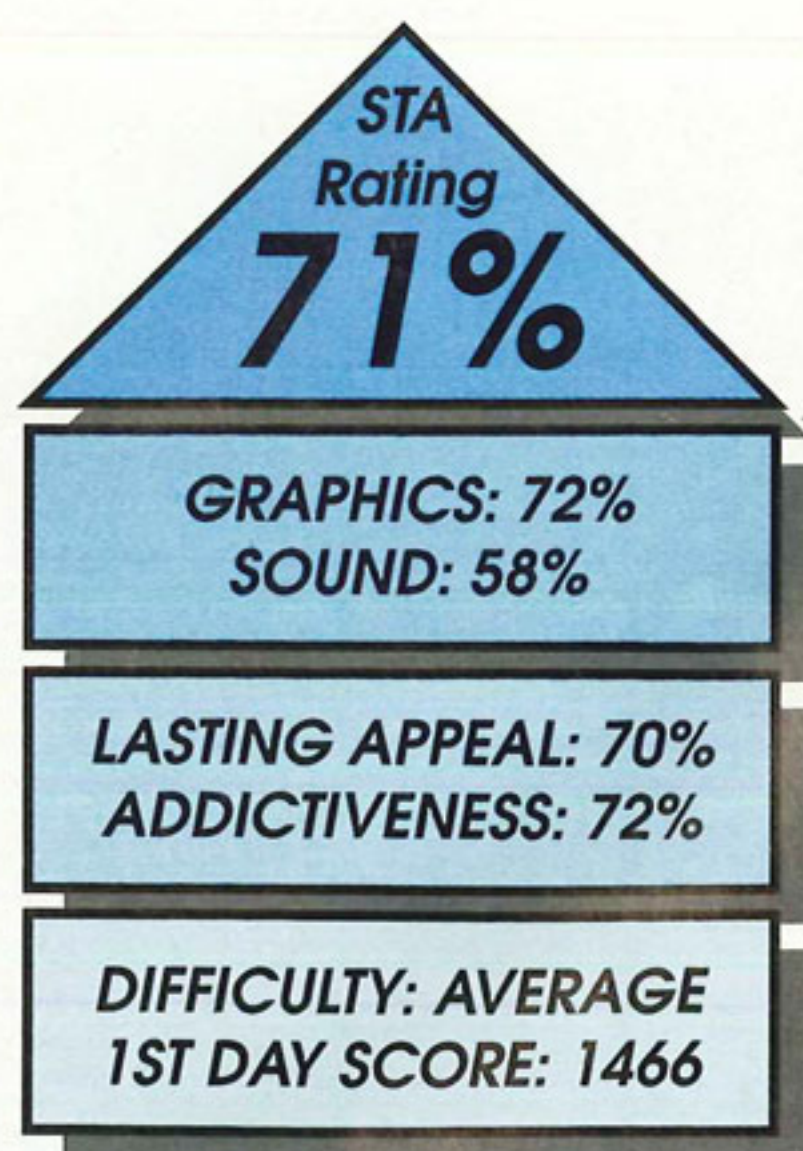
Soccer was the world's first true football simulation – from indoor league to World Cup Final, it's just like the real thing;



MICRO PROSE
SIMULATION • SOFTWARE

MicroProse, Unit 1, Hampton Road Industrial Estate, Tetbury, Glos, GL8 8DA.

Using your grey matter to do battle against the supernatural General in a mind duel to the death.



"You are a fanatical warrior with magical powers, the strength of an army and a claim to the battle-scarred land of Gargore. An Onslaught is about to follow, probably by Hewson."

ONSLAUGHT

HEWSON (£24.95)

"Ha!...Evil fiend, you cannot harm me, I have the strength of an army," you said in a psychopathic manner whilst swinging a heavy duty club, ready to do some heavy duty damage. 'Thwack!'. One swift blow separates your opponent's head from his body. "So you like fighting, do you?" you shout at the top of your voice. Another group of men come charging towards you. "No problem", you say to yourself.

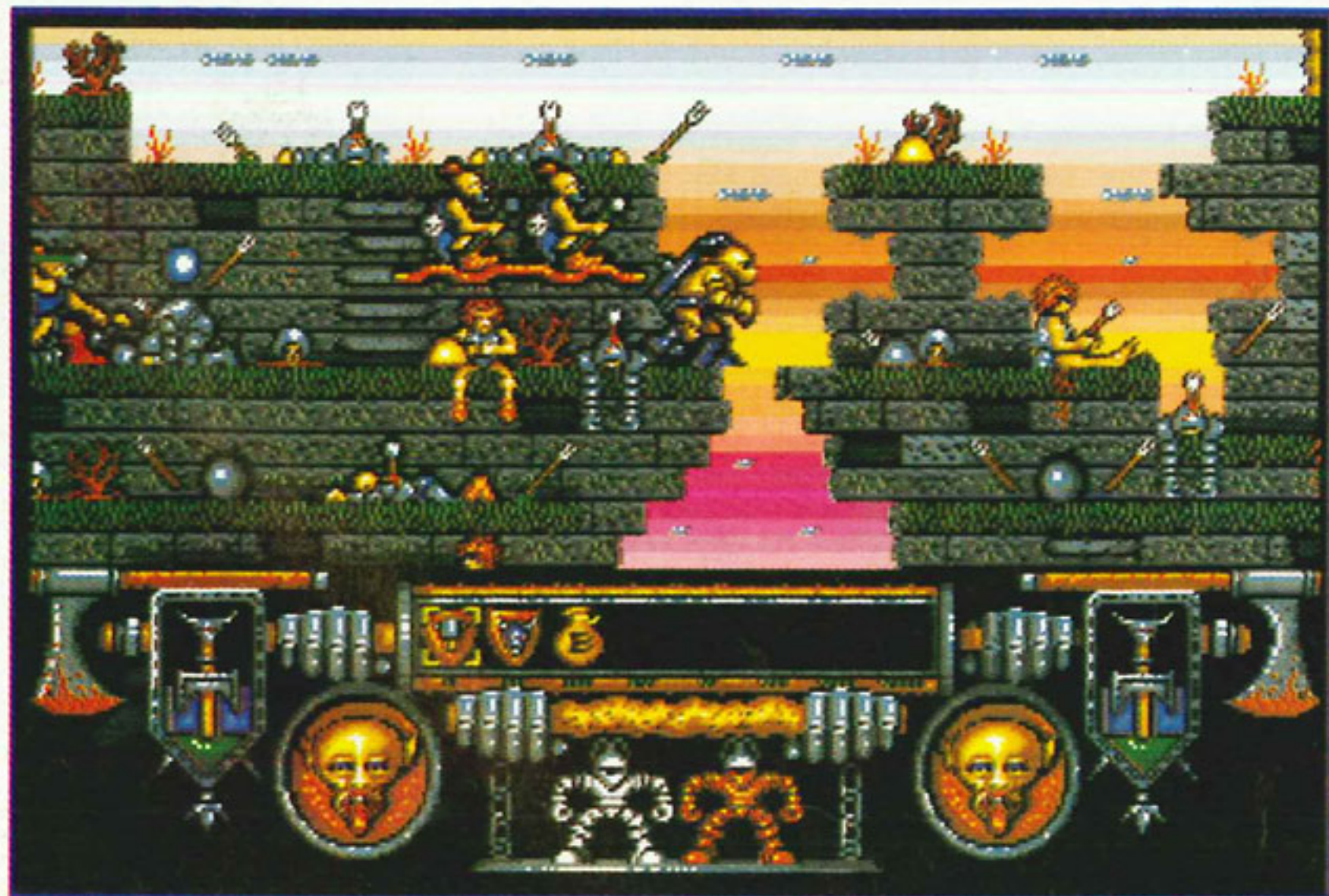
Leaning over your last opponent, you reach down and grab a crossbow. Pulling the bowstring back and inserting a bolt into the firing slot, you squeeze the trigger, letting the arrow fly. It hits the first man squarely in the chest and he slumps to the ground. 'Twang', off flies another shot and another opponent falls to the floor, dead. You can now see the enemy's banner only another few yards in front of

you, but there's something else there as well. Focusing on the distance object, you notice you are looking down the barrel of a cannon. "Ahhhhhh..." is your last word as an extremely heavy, solid, metal ball comes flying towards you at terrific speed. 'Boom', the enemy cheers as the smoke clears from where you were standing; now the only remaining part of your person is a battle-scarred pair of shoes, because everything else, including your head, is bouncing along the ground next to you.

Sounds good fun, doesn't it? As mentioned earlier, you play the part of a fanatical warrior, whom everyone fears because of his might in battle. The game is divided into four parts: field battles, sieges, defending actions and mind combat. Field battles occur most out of these four different game plays. It puts you up against the hordes of enemy men that you have to stop from getting to your banner whilst at the same time you have to go and capture their banner. The more enemy men you let get past you, the more danger there is of your flag being taken. Capturing their flag stops more reinforcements from arriving,

What I must say about Onslaught is that it has brilliant effects, the tune is a bit annoying but I like the sound effects. The graphics are good, too, being very colourful. My only reservation is that it is too repetitive and after a while it becomes a little tedious. At first, the game is very good, with many new places to conquer and new enemies to attack. I thought the mind duel was a good idea, but I think more could have been added, because it would have been nice if you could venture in closer to the meanie or maybe even come round and attack him from behind. All in all, I think Onslaught holds a lot of potential and if you have got the patience to conquer all of the different field battles, you should enjoy it - but I'm not sure it's worth the asking price.

AS



Taking on everyone you can is the name of the game in Hewson's latest release, Onslaught.



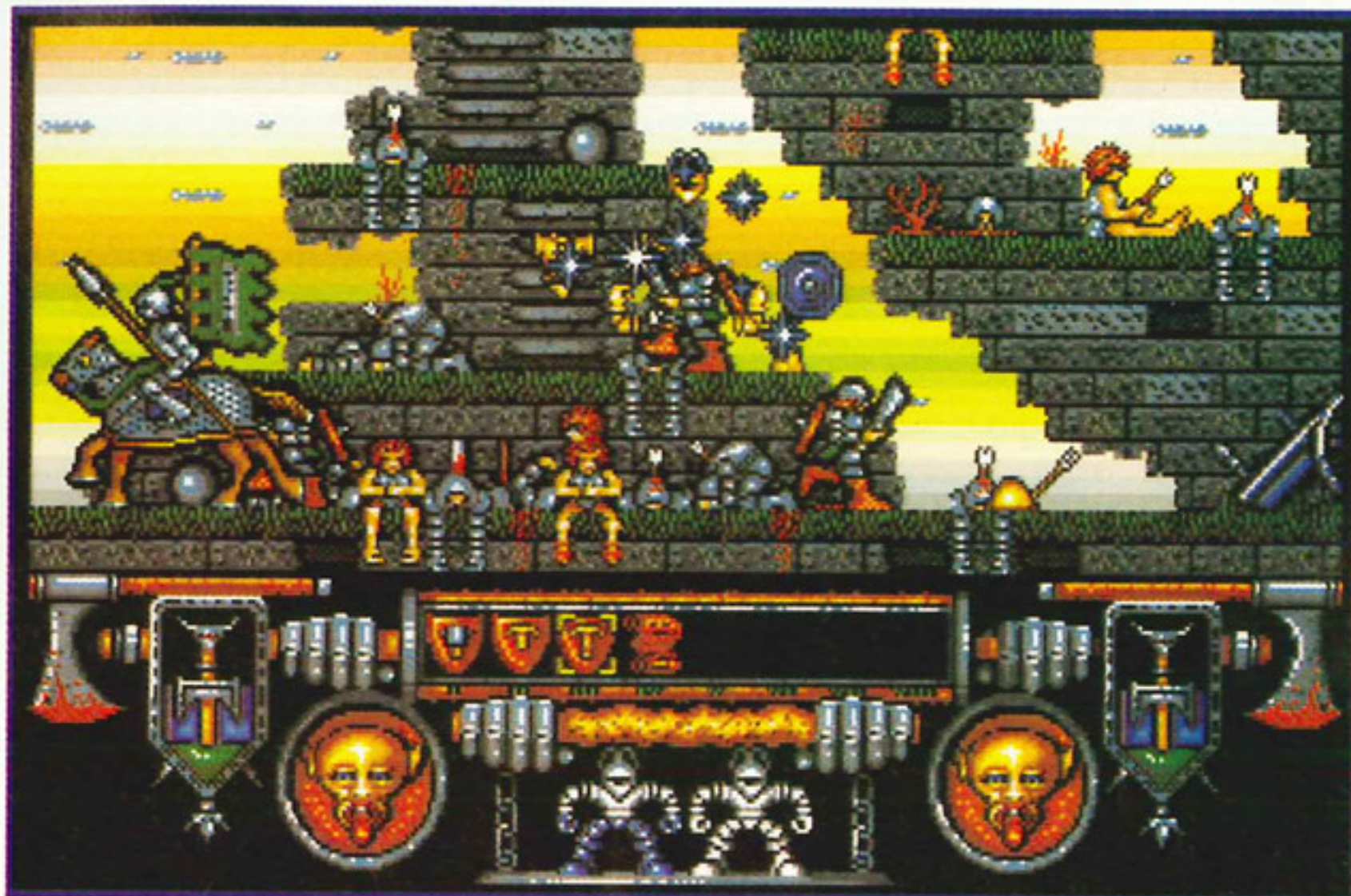
The battlefields are littered with all manner of blood-thirsty warriors. You are confronted by a huge armour-clad juggernaut. Several well-aimed blows will eventually send the vehicle reeling into oblivion, allowing you to collect any bonuses it might leave behind.



then all you have to do to win that battle is mop up the remaining troops.

If you lose the battle, you will go into a defending action. These work in the same way as a field battle, except your stronghold is the background for the battle. If you win, all well and good and it's your turn to go and raid someone else, but if you lose, you have to enter a mind duel with the enemy General.

A mind duel consists of beating up the other meanie with your grey matter. The enemy General is represented by a central head with large arms extending from the centre. You are shown as your banner, from which you can move left and right and fire mind blasts and the General. By repeatedly shooting at the General's head, his arms will gradually get smaller until they are no more and you become the victor, ready for the next campaign. If you lose, however, your game is over I'm afraid. The last type of play is the siege. The siege is the same as a defending action, except it is the other way around: with you attacking and him defending. If you win the siege battle you go into a mind duel, and winning that allows you to capture the enemy's castle. Losing it just puts you back out on the battlefield. Whilst doing battle against the enemy, you will come across different types of troops,



Having been charged down by a cavalry of horsemen, you gasp your last breath as your armour finally explodes into several pieces.

ranging from berserkers to human suicides that run towards you and explode. Strap on your armour, unsheath your club and ready yourself for battle. As you approach the battleground, you ask yourself, "Am I ready for Onslaught?"

STA

Upon defeating the hordes of enemy that confront you in each level, you have to capture the enemies flag. Then, and only then, is the victory yours.



Bright, colourful and loud - that's the best way to describe Hewson's latest game, Onslaught. The first thing I noticed about the game was the wonderfully detailed and highly colourful backdrops. The action itself is both fast and furious and I really enjoyed the hectic action. Control of the warrior is well implemented, although it did take some time for me to get used to the weapon select option. The game's sound effects are exceptional, the noise of cold steel on armour being my personal favorite. However, I found one of the game's best features to be the blend between outright arcade action and thoughtful strategy. Without doubt, Onslaught is one of the best games to appear from Hewson. I loved it.

NC

Onslaught is Hewson's first serious release since the brilliant Nebulus. The game is highly original and the graphics and animation are of a standard we should expect from leading game designers. The main action is platform-style which has been taken many steps further and the pace is never short of furious. Generally, this is a first-rate game, excellently designed and professionally finished, and the gameplay will appeal to advanced arcade-game players. But although this is obviously fast and challenging action, I have no real desire to go back and play it - unlike Nebulus, which kept me interested for weeks.

JS

From the main menu you can choose which course to race on and the character you want to drive the car.



"You're in pole position: the red lights come on, 3..2..1..GO! The action's fast and furious in Activision's Power Drift."

POWERDRIFT

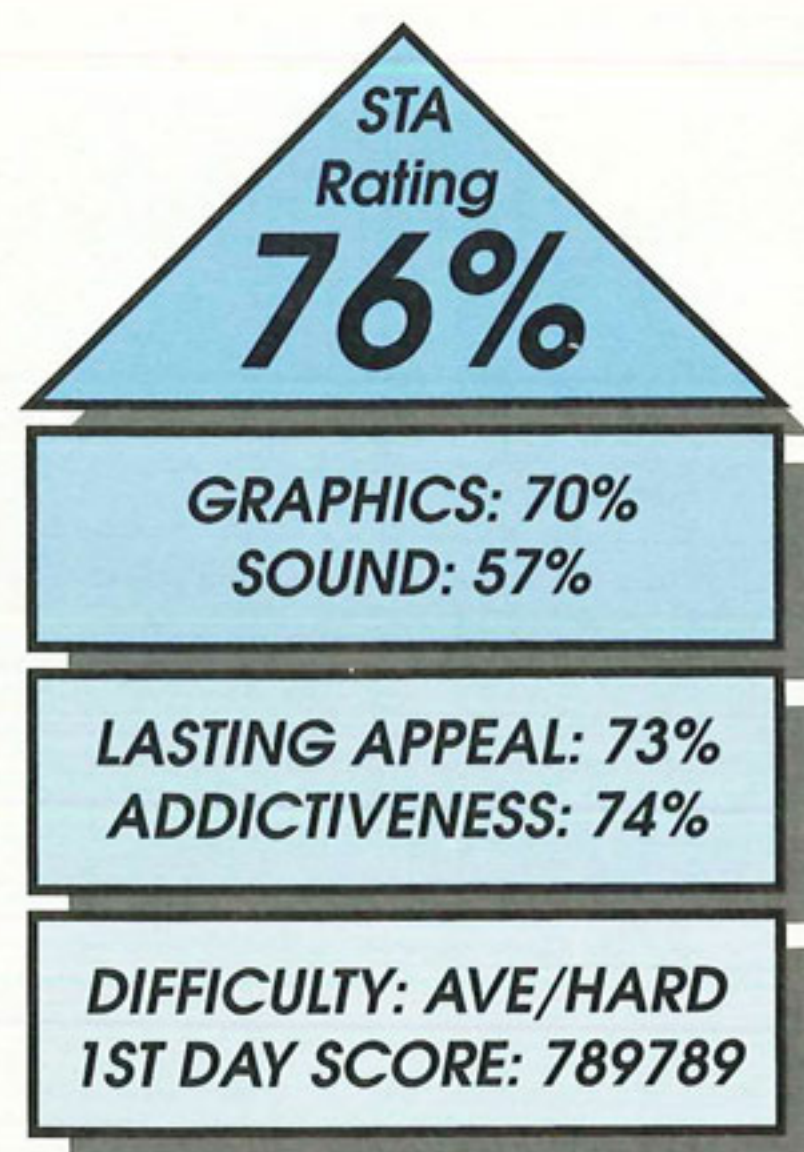
ACTIVISION (£24.95)

When this coin-op first appeared in the arcades at the beginning of 1988, not much notice was taken of it because games like Afterburner and Space Harrier were around with their fancy hydraulic chairs, and so people spent their money on them. But when you take away the hydraulics, the game is nowhere near as

good - but this is where Power Drift is different. There was both a stand-up version as well as a sit-down hydraulic version and both were as good as each other. On the coin-op, the road wasn't like any other racing game. Where as others just laid flat on the ground, Power Drift's road twisted and turned and went all over the place. That, as well as its immense playability, took Power Drift to the top of the coin-op charts.

I thought Power Drift was a good game, the graphics being particularly impressive when in full swing. The speed of the car has been represented well and when you hit a slope it actually feels like you're going up a hill, whereas other games fail in that department. I do have one comment, though, and that is when you really motoring you tend to lose the road because the background road seems to blend in somewhat. I like the idea of selecting your character as in the coin-op, it makes a change from just getting out there and revving up the engine. Overall, I think Z.Z.K.J. has done the best job anyone could have and, for that, I recommend this game to any fan of the coin-op and even those looking for an above average racing game. Go and buy it now!

AS



To make the best job they could, they brought in someone who knew what he was doing. Z.Z.K.J. was chosen to do the massive conversion because of his previous hit success, Super Hang-On. When Z.Z.K.J. started, he knew that he would not be able to put in every little piece of the coin-op, but he did his best. "Is it as good as Super Hang-On though?" I can hear you say. Well, see for yourself. The game comes in a nicely presented package and is programmed onto three disks. Once you have booted up, you get the choice of either using the mouse or a joystick. Next you can choose the sensitivity of the controls, ranging from doing a complete spin at the slightest touch of the mouse, to a gentle turn when you roll the mouse over the whole desk.

Then you can start out on the race course. First, you have to choose which driver to have, and with a selection of twelve I'm sure there is something for everyone. You can also choose which course to start on, and then it's out to the track. Here is where the first difference occurs between the coin-op and the conversion. In the arcade version, a crane lowered you into your car, but on the conversion you just appear there - but it's no



The road, unlike the coin-op's, doesn't twist to the side, but this doesn't make it an unfaithful conversion.



big loss, is it? Then, like in the coin-op, the screen scans around the track before stopping on the starting line and more importantly, your car and you. Then a nicely drawn "start" flag and starting lights drift round and then out in front of you before coming to a halt. The red lights come on and a voice says "Three, two, one, GO!" As the light turns green, off you race.

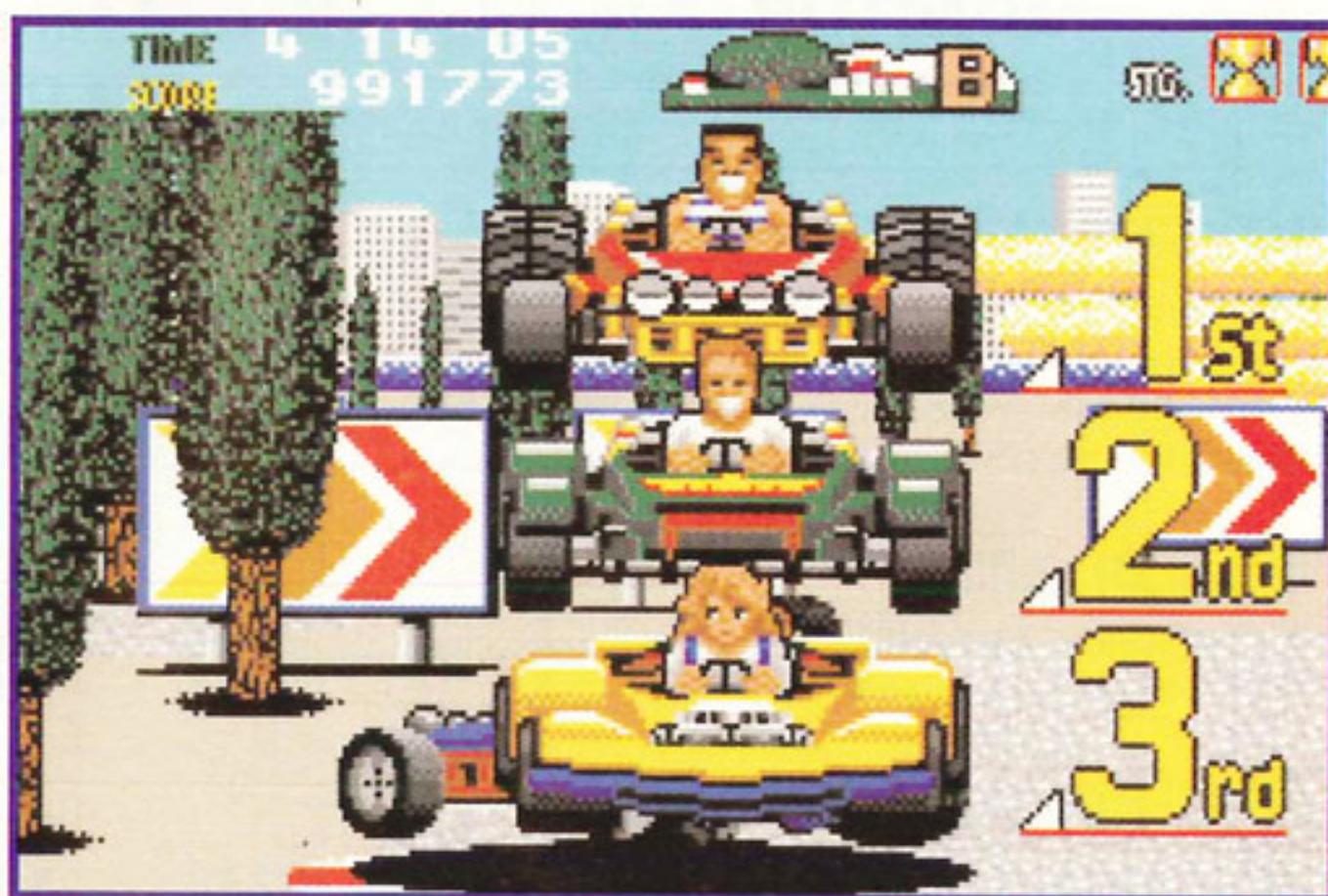
This is when the second and major difference occurs. On the coin-op, the rack tilts and turns as you drive along, but on the conversion the road remains horizontal, just turning from left to right as you go around corners, and up and down as you go over the hills. Whilst in the hot seat, the action is fast and furious, as it says on the back of the box. As you race around the course, you have to try and avoid the opposition as contact with these makes you spin off course and driving over the edge of a bridge makes you crash so your car is no more. The good thing I found with Power Drift was that if you stop on the track, you can see other parts of the course and other cars driving around. Also if your ST has a blitter in it, the game is tremendously faster. So come on all you speed freaks out there, belt up and put the pedal to the metal!

STA

Many doubted that it could be done, and so Activision entrusted the rather daunting task of converting the Power Drift coin-op to their best team, and the result has surprised even the staunchest of critics. The arcade game has the biggest and fastest-moving sprites ever, and the Power Drift team have made few concessions with the sixteen-bit version - at times there are more than sixty sprites on screen. The ST has really been stretched to the limits here, and so occasionally the machine struggles to run the game smoothly. Therefore, the blitter-chip option, for those lucky enough to have the chip, is a welcomed inclusion. Exciting race action at its best, confused at times by the amount of sprites on screen, but generally a highly commendable job of a seemingly impossible conversion.

JS

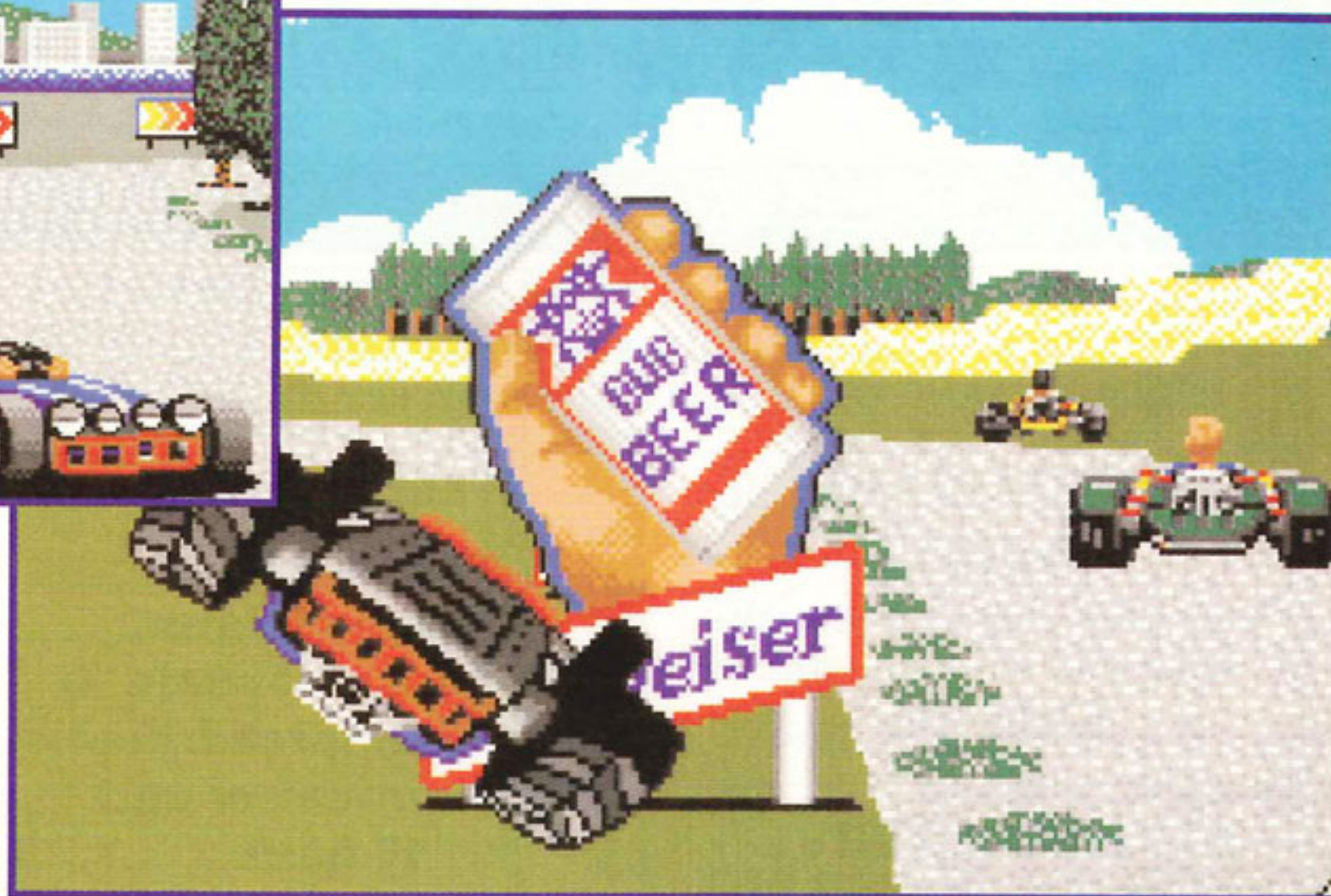
Despite a gallant effort, you fail to make any of the top three slots. But don't worry, using the continue option you can have another try.



After having seen Power Drift in the arcades I was somewhat sceptical as to whether Activision would be able to do it justice. Happily I'm glad to report that the team responsible have produced a first-class racing game. It's the game's graphics which make it so special. The game is played in real-time and the way in which the programmer has included nearly every aspect of the game is incredible. The sound effects are one of the game's weaker points, the droning sound of the engine being the most irritating, while the sampled speech is the high-point. Meanwhile, the gameplay is excellent, although on some stages I did become a little disorientated. To sum up, Power Drift is a very competent conversion. If you enjoy race games, you'll love Power Drift.

NC

If you come too close to the edge of the course, your car will spin and you will lose your position.



This is what the game is about: turning the joystick so you pull a tight corner a full speed, known as the Power Drift.



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There must be so many beat'em-ups around at the moment I would have thought everybody would have a games shelf full of them and be sick of the sight of such games. Mind you, they still keep coming out and so I sat down and tried to find out the potential of this game. To be quite honest, I quite enjoyed playing *Ninja Warriors*, even though it's not graphically astounding, nor does it break any barriers in the sound department. The good thing is that it's so easy to play - no complicated rules to learn - all you have to do is get out there and give 'em hell. The trouble is, there is not enough there to keep you coming back for more. I can only suggest you try the game first before you go out and spend your hard-earned cash on something you might not like.

AS

During the game, heavy artillery is called in for back-up. The tank shown here first attacks with its main weapon, and when you get in close, a man pops up from the turret and attempts to blow you away with heavy machine gun fire.



The *Ninja Warriors* is the fourth arcade licence purchased under the Virgin games label. It is the year, 1993, and an evil dictator named Bangler controls the army and the police and he is also a known crime lord. But there is hope for the world yet, since a rebel called Mulk has created two assassination machines. You are one of these assassination machines, also

STA
Rating
65%

GRAPHICS: 52%
SOUND: 53%

LASTING APPEAL: 65%
ADDICTIVENESS: 68%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 24000

Half way through the levels, you will have to battle against a rather nasty person. Here you have to defeat a fire-breathing soldier!



"Hi-yah! So you want a fight, huh. Well, do you reckon you can become a *Ninja Warrior* and take on an army?"

NINJA WARRIORS

VIRGIN/MASTERTRONIC (£19.99)

known as a *Ninja Warrior*. Shurikens and knives are your only weapon, but don't use all of your shurikens at once because you only have a limited supply of them. In total, you have to battle your way through six different levels, starting off in the city's slum area and progressing through to the mighty Bangler's mansion.

In each scene, you will have to do battle against a variety of knife men, gunmen and even a hunchbacked ground spiders. Only if you manage to battle through to the last level will you have the chance to corner Bangler in his lair. Control of your warrior is via the joystick, pushing up to jump and down to walk. Each time you press the fire button your warrior will let fly with a shuriken, unless, that is, you have used your quota, then you'll have to resort to using your blades. To block incoming attacks, hold the fire button down and your warrior will cross his knives. Along the way you will come up against heavy artillery in the form of a portable rocket launcher and even a tank that takes up most of the screen!



As you stroll along the suburbs of downtown New York, You are likely to get attacked by an army incorporating other ninjas as skillful as yourself.

When you come to the middle or end of a level, you will have to battle with a particularly bad nasty, ranging from the aforementioned tank to another *Ninja* with a huge sword, or even a man that breathes fire! You can usually collect extra shurikens by destroying the rocket firers or, sometimes, the end-of-level baddies. If you only have a single-sided disk drive, you will only get levels 1, 2, 4 and 5 instead of the complete game. So if you're ready to take on armies of men and tanks, don your *Ninja* clothes and get ready for the chop.

STA

Goodness! Another martial arts beat'em up? Well, yes, *Ninja Warriors* is yet another from the Bruce Lee school of self defence. To be honest, I couldn't find much new in this variation. On the minus side, the graphics are a little small, the programmers electing to use only half of the possible playing area. The sound, again, is merely adequate; although there is some nice sampled speech. So, did I enjoy *Ninja Warriors*? Well, despite its rather average appearance, the game played rather well and I found myself coming back for more again and again. So, if you want a martial arts game that plays well, check out this one - you could do a lot worse.

NC

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**OPERATION
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Not only has all the action and game play been captured, but so has the excitement, making it one of the most satisfying and compulsive shoot-em-ups to have appeared in a long time. ACE licensed from Taito Corp. 1988



DOUBLE DRAGON —

Join in deadly combat with the savage street gang of the infamous Shadow Boss. Use whatever weapons come to hand as you pursue the gang through the slums, factories, and wooded outskirts of the city to reach the Black Warrior hideout, for the final confrontation with the Shadow Boss himself!

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**DOUBLE
DRAGON**

4

**HIGH
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ST/
AMIGA**

BATMAN
THE CAPED CRUSADER

BATMAN — The characters and backgrounds are striking — each are superlative — features a soundtrack in glorious remixed stereo. The One TM & © DC Comics Inc. 1988. All Rights Reserved.



ocean

"Don your suit of armour and take on the role of the Knight of Thunder in Titus's latest offering, Knight Force."

KNIGHTFORCE

TITUS (£19.95)

Upon booting up Knight Force I was confronted by a nicely drawn loading screen and a short tune and when prompted to insert disk B, I did so. After a lengthy loading time, the main screen came up enabling me to select a time zone. The backgrounds are well drawn, as are the sprites (the animation is slightly jerky but hard to notice in the middle of a fight). Unfortunately, the title tune and spot sound effects failed to inspire me. The movement of the knight is simple enough, but I found that once you had been knocked over it was difficult to get back up again because the opponent just stood over you and attacked, knocking you back down. Knight Force is an easy game to get into and finding the sorcerer's clones is not too difficult, but I don't think there is enough in this game to keep you coming back for more. At the end of the day, I would only recommend this game to a fanatical hack'em-up games player.

AS

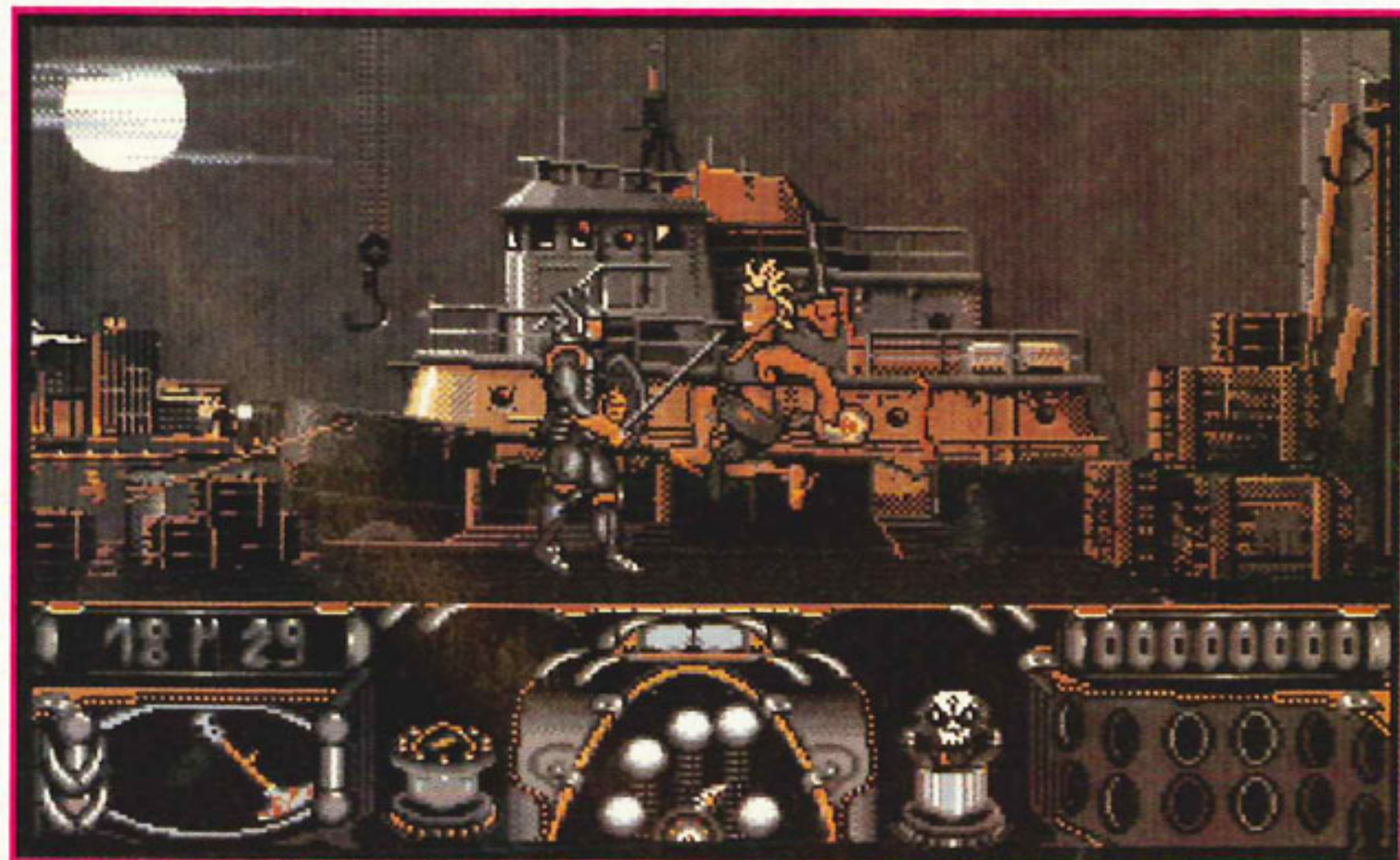
At the end of each time zone you have to do battle with a sorcerer. Defeat him and one of the amulets is yours.



Knight Force places you in the role of the Knight of Thunder sent on a quest to destroy Red Sabbath, the evil sorcerer, and rescue Princess Tanya. But, before you do this you have to recover each of

the amulets placed in each of the five time zones. This is done by hacking up the opposition (in the form of cave men, robots and even an octopus at the New York dockside) with your trusty sword and, as you have not been defeated to date, don't let the side down now. To select each time zone (five in all), all you have to do is move the cursor over the chosen dolmen (that's a prehistoric monument for those of you that did not know) and press the button. This transports your valiant warrior to either Prehistoric times, in Versaille (a long time ago), New York present day, The Future or, finally, an unreal universe called The Mystical zone.

At some point during each zone you will have to do battle with one of the Sorcerer's clones who will attempt to kill you using his magical powers. Get too close to him and he will vanish in a puff of green smoke and reappear behind you, blasting away at your precious life force. If



In different time zones there are all manner of creatures. Here, a New York gang leader tries to convince you he's the boss.

STA
Rating

59%

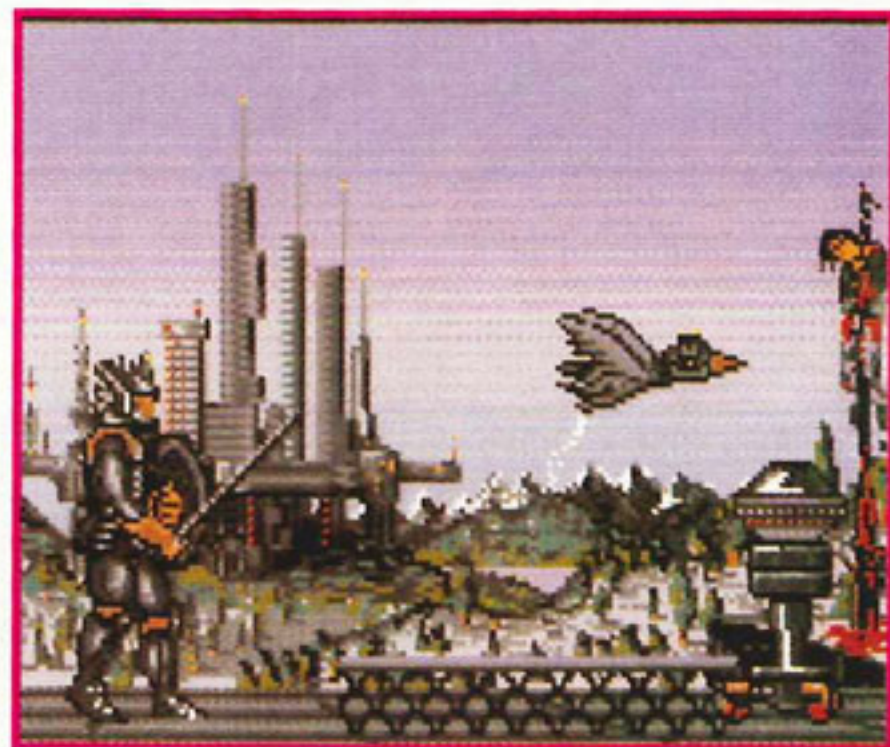
GRAPHICS: 55%
SOUND: 45%

LASTING APPEAL: 55%
ADDICTIVENESS: 53%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 10000

you manage to defeat one of the wizards, you can now obtain one of the amulets and, having done so, you can leave the level by piercing the Time Bird's heart. Repeat this process for each of the five time zones and you will have to confront the dreaded Red Sabbath (oh no, not the dreaded Red Sabbath). If after a long and dangerous battle, you manage to overcome the sorcerer and rescue the Princess, you will become a hero remembered by everyone for his courage and skilful swordplay.

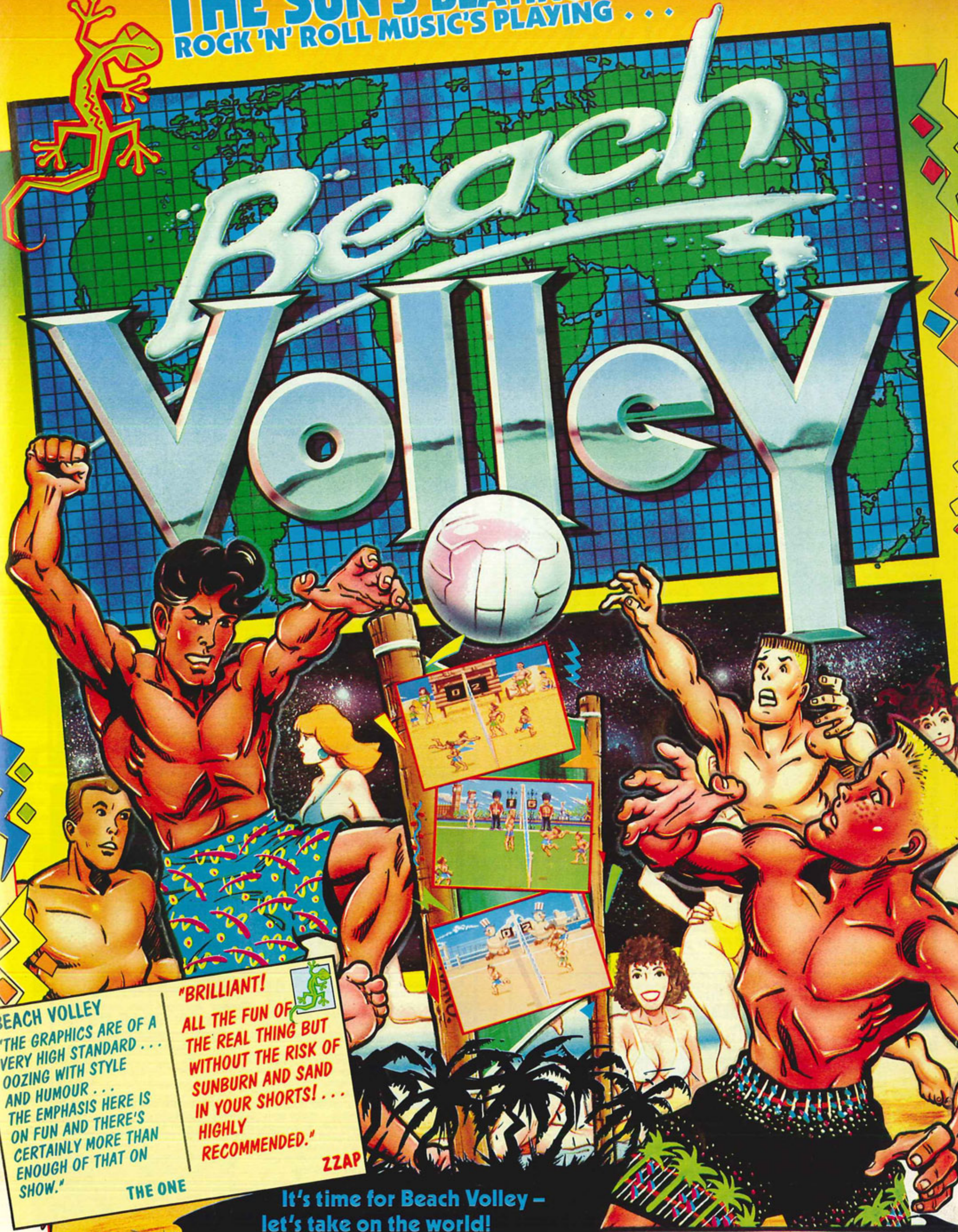
STA



Titus's past titles all seem to have revolved around vehicles of some sort, so it makes a welcome change to see Knight Force. The game features some very nicely drawn character sprites and some impressive backdrops. The animation of the large sprites, however, is somewhat jerky, although that doesn't affect the overall enjoyment of the game. The sound effects, though somewhat sparse, prove adequate and I found the game's main tune quite pleasant. The gameplay did become rather repetitive and I found many of the adversaries a little unforgiving in their attack. To sum up, Knight Force is a well presented hack'n'slay-style game, although I do question its long-term appeal.

NC

THE SUN'S BEATING DOWN,
ROCK 'N' ROLL MUSIC'S PLAYING ...



BEACH VOLLEY
"THE GRAPHICS ARE OF A
VERY HIGH STANDARD ...
OOZING WITH STYLE
AND HUMOUR ...
THE EMPHASIS HERE IS
ON FUN AND THERE'S
CERTAINLY MORE THAN
ENOUGH OF THAT ON
SHOW."

THE ONE

"BRILLIANT!
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THE REAL THING BUT
WITHOUT THE RISK OF
SUNBURN AND SAND
IN YOUR SHORTS! ...
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RECOMMENDED."

ZZAP

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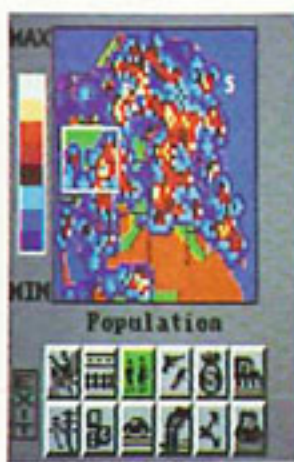
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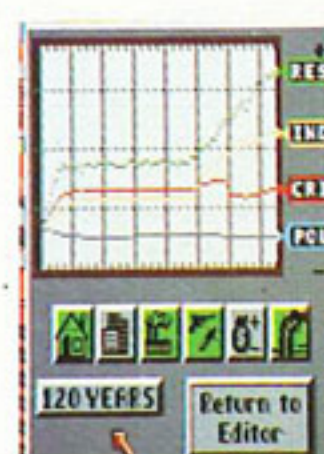


SIM CITY

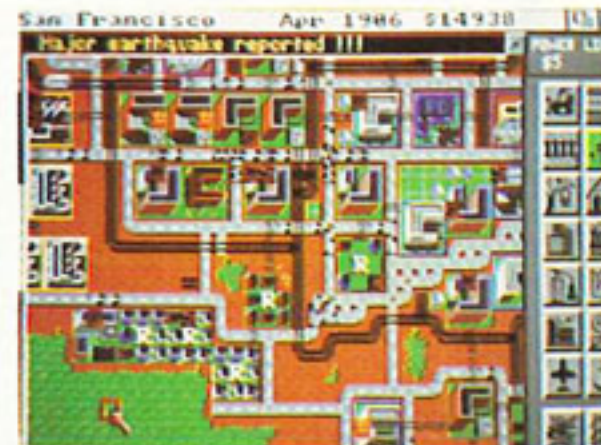
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INFOWORLD Volume II Issue 20: "People playing Sim City are completely plugged into the world they create, disappearing for hours."
NEW YORK TIMES: "The model is very sophisticated, yet understandable. And just as important, it's fun, too."



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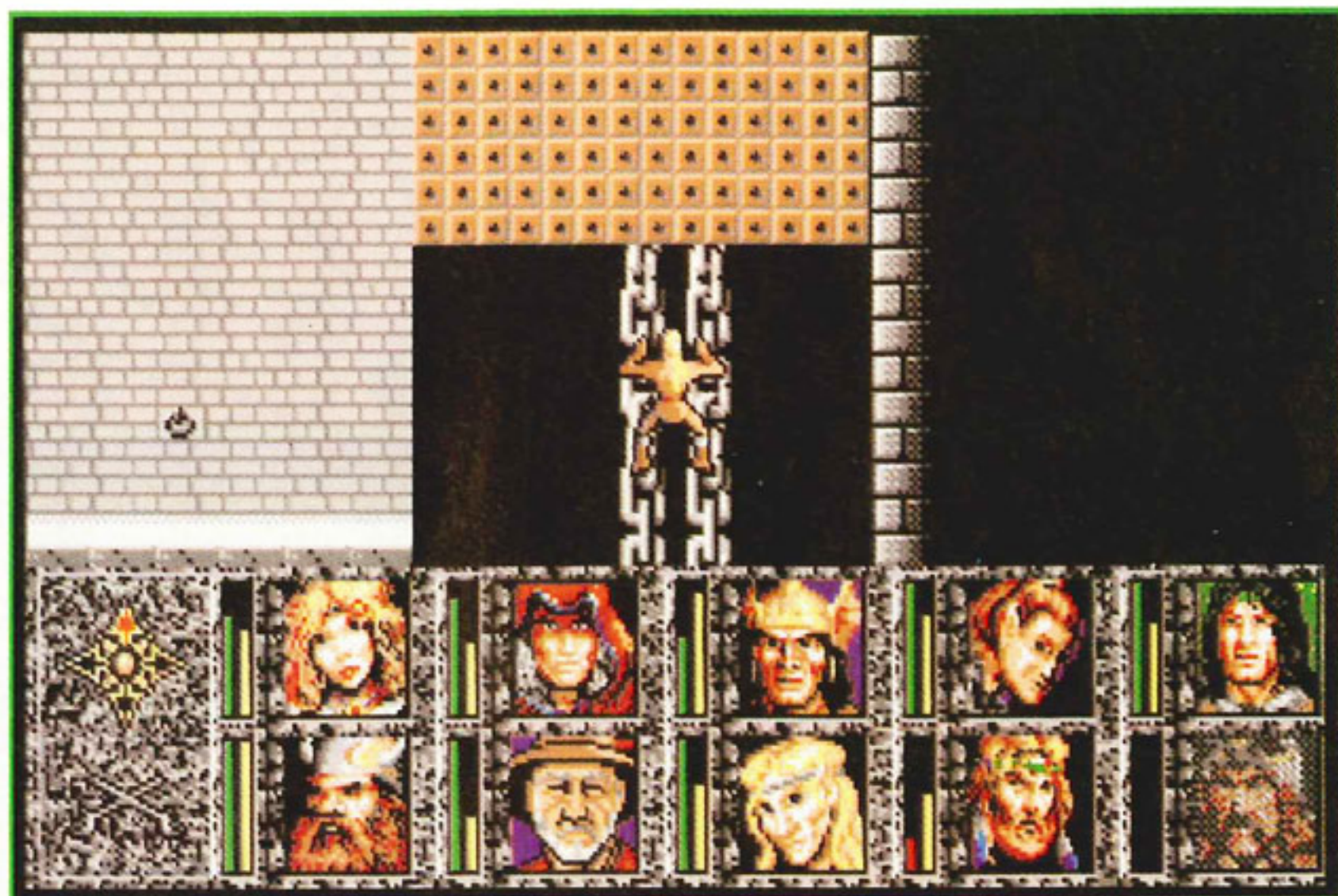


Being a role-playing fan, I enjoyed playing *Dragons of Flame* and found it more enjoyable than *Heroes of the Lance*, mainly because of the change in landscapes (in *Heroes* there was only type of background, the inside of a building and sewage pipes, but in *Dragons of Flame* you can explore the outside world as well as the inside of a castle) and the ability to take on extra people. Many things have been kept the same as in *Heroes* which makes it easy to use for anyone who played the first one. The graphics are well drawn with your character moving smoothly across the screen, or gliding through the air when he makes a jump. The sound is sparse in the actual game, but the loading tune is good. For anyone out there who has played the *Heroes* and wants a game of the same type, go out and buy it now.

AS

In the first game, *Heroes of the Lance*, the objective was to venture into the bowels of Xak Tsaroth and rescue the Disks of Mishakal after destroying the huge Khisanth in a battle to the death (either yours or his). Now, aided with these mystical disks of healing you have to journey south to Pax Tharkas to free the slaves held there and recover the long-lost "Wyrmslayer", a legendary sword. When you begin, you are presented with an overhead view of your companions which you can then move around to your desired destination. Control is via the joystick and the keyboard: the joystick enabling you to move around and the keyboard selecting different menus. As in *Heroes*, you are only represented by one of your characters which you can change at your will. As you walk around the main map area,

Once inside Pax Tharkas, you will have to negotiate different obstacles like a large chain seen here.



"Once again you can take control of the Companions of the Lance in U.S. GOLD's second AD+D action game, *Dragons of Flame*."

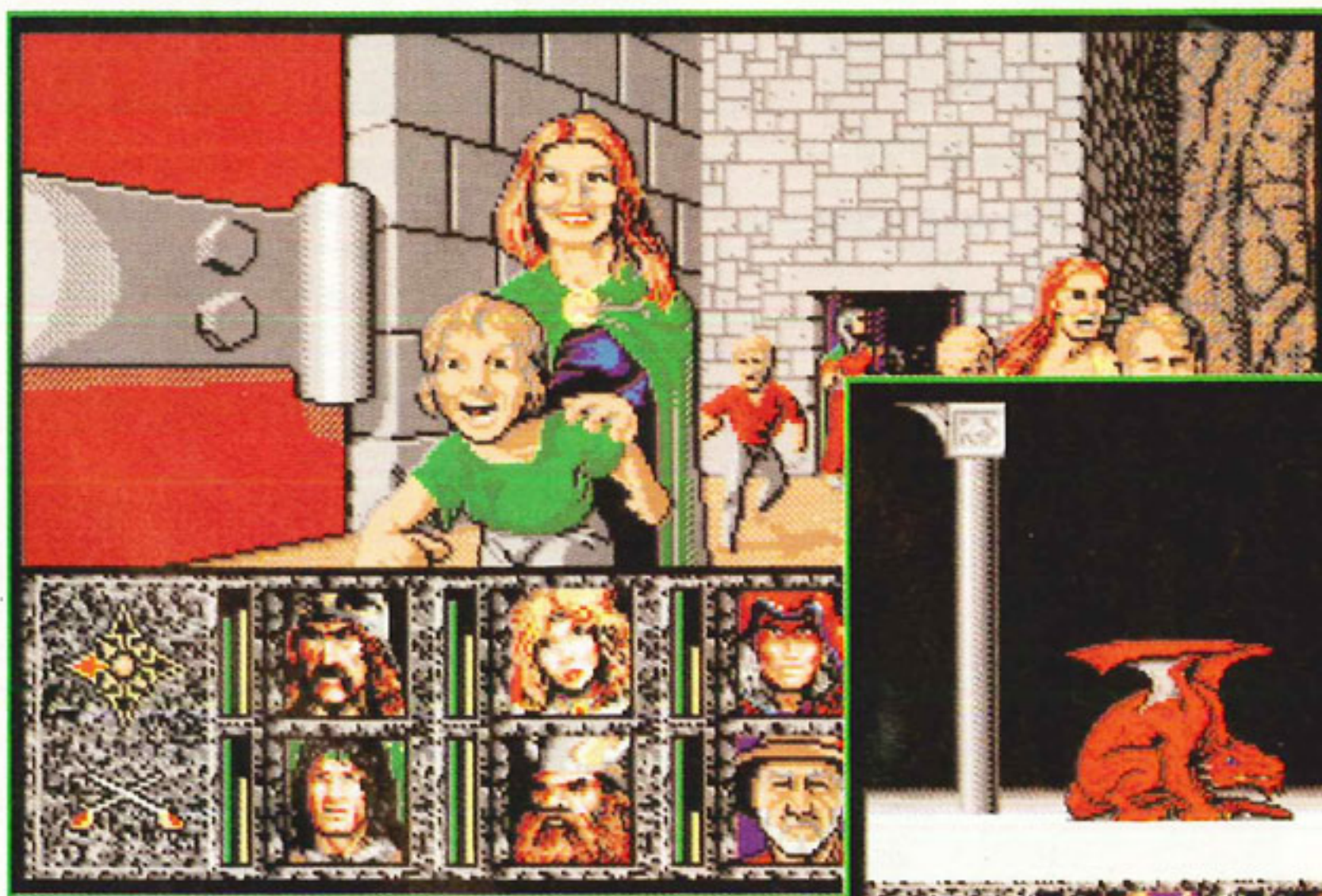
DRAGONS OF FLAME

■ US GOLD (£24.95) ■

you will come across loads of large lizards which represent the force of Draconians, and if you get too close to them the screen will change to a horizontal view, as in *Heroes*, until you have defeated the marauding fiends when, at the press of a button (the 0 key to be precise), you will return to the overhead map. Also, if you

come across friendly people, the screen will change and if you have enough room (ten people total) they will join your merry band and aid you in your quest.

When battling the enemy, you can do it in a number of ways: A. You can attack with your sword. B. Fire from a distance with your bow, or C. Blast away at them using magic. If using the last method, you will need to select the mage, Raistlin and put in the front four characters. Pressing the space bar will show the main menu which will allow you to choose Magic User spells, then a sub-menu will appear showing the different spells the caster knows. A lot of the magical spells are the same as the ones in *Heroes*, most of them being offensive whilst the Clerical spells



When confronted with a door, open it. You never know what may be behind them. You might have opened the door to the dungeon, thus letting the women and children run for their lives. Or it could be a dragon waiting to eat you. Toasted warrior anyone?



I've been looking forward to *Dragons of Flame* for quite sometime now and, I'm glad to report, I haven't been disappointed. Unlike its predecessor, *Heroes of the Lance*, *Dragons of Flame* offers adventurers a wide range of locations to visit. Also, I found the ability to conscript the more friendly people of the land into my merry band very helpful. Many people thought that *Heroes of the Lance* was a little too easy. Happily, I can verify that *Dragons of Flame* poses much more of a challenge. Therefore, with its adequate graphics and sound, well implemented gameplay and overall appeal, I'll have to give *Dragons of Flame* the thumbs up.

NC

Guide your leader around the mystical land of Krynn, trying to avoid the enemy and therefore increasing the chance of your survival

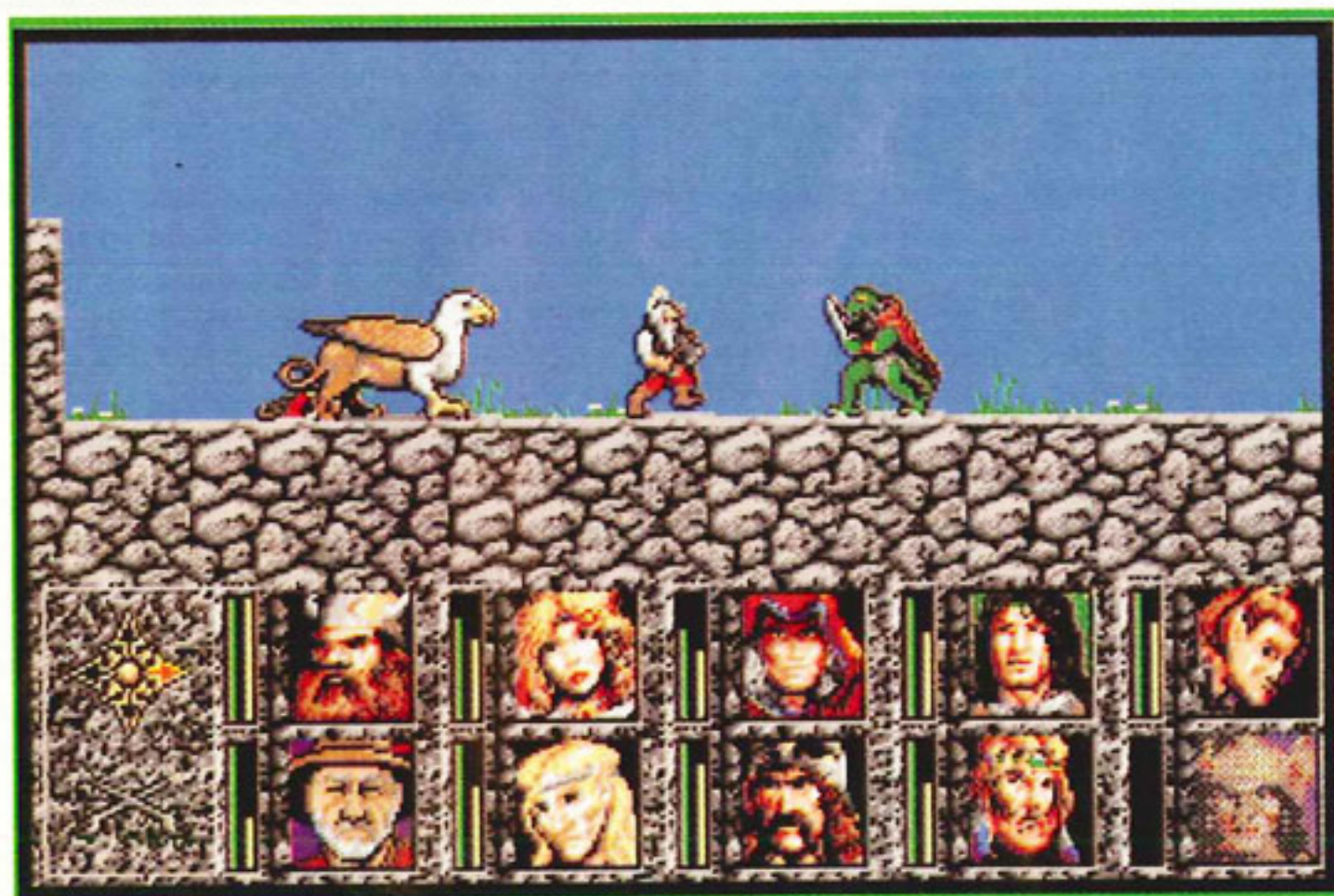


(used by Goldmoon) are for healing and defensive purposes. The staff that provides the user with the ability to use magic has one catch: a limited number of charges. The Staff of Magius (Magic user spells) has a hundred charges, whereas the Blue Crystal Staff (Clerical Spells) has twice that amount. Casting spells can use one to ten charges depending on the power and type of spell. You can also find potions along your quest and the only way to find out what they do is to drink them. As well as the spell list, the main menu hosts a lot more. For instance, there is a Quest map available which shows the lands around you and your current position. Also the menu gives you the option to take an item, give an item to someone else, open doors or use a specific item. You can also save your current position or load an old game.

When U.S. Gold announced they were going to produce an *Advanced Dungeons and Dragons* range I thought we were going to be in for the usual graphic-lacking role-playing games. However, with titles such as *Heroes of the Lance*, *Hillsfar* and now *Dragons of Flame*, I've been proven very wrong. This latest game seems to offer more of a challenge than its predecessor, *Heroes of the Lance*. The graphics are well portrayed and the sound adequate for a game of this type. The thing I noticed about *Dragons of Flame* was the playability. Although the game uses complex menus, they have all been set out in a friendly, easy-to-use manner. Overall, *Dragons of Flame* is a quality product that will keep AD&D fans happy for quite some time.

JS

After a while of playing, you will have to make your way to the mighty fortress of Pax Tharkas where you will have to search the catacombs looking for the women and children to release. But it's not that easy. Along the way you will be confronted by all manner of creatures, ranging from the relatively easy Aghar



Whilst outside you will get attacked by hordes of nasties, including and eagle-headed lion called a Griffon, or an overgrown wasp.

By selecting the main menu you can get a quest map which shows the lands of Krynn, Pax Tharkas and your current position.



STA
Rating
73%

GRAPHICS: 58%
SOUND: 52%

LASTING APPEAL: 81%
ADDICTIVENESS: 73%

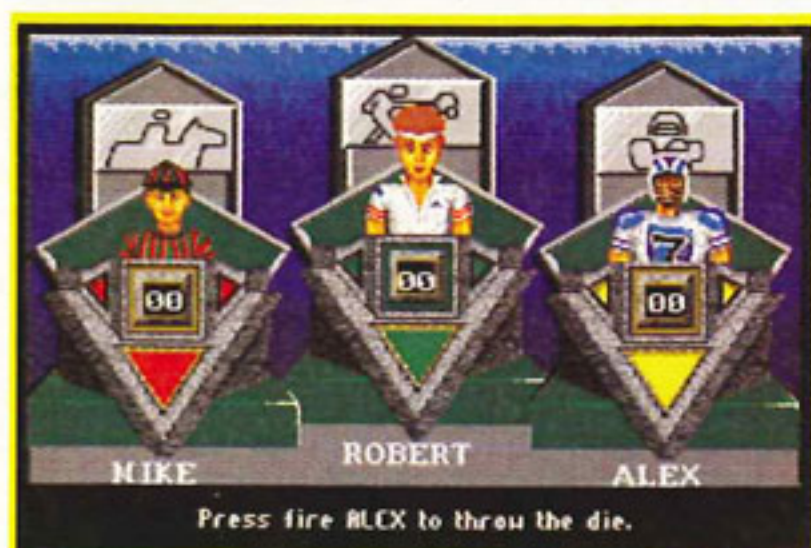
DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

(gully dwarves) to the mighty Ember (a large red dragon with very hot breath). Whilst inside the castle you will have to climb up and down chains, collect treasure (usually guarded by something nasty) and you may even see Lord Verminaard (a well 'ard dude likely to feed you to his pet dragon). Once you have completed your mission you will have to make your way to the exit chased by the hordes of nasties, but this is also easier said than done. In the fortress alone there are over sixty opponents to keep you occupied, as well as various other bits and pieces.

STA

Sporting Triangles follows the T.V. programme closely and a rendition of the theme tune plays whilst loading. The tune is fairly good, as are the graphics, but most of the pictures are not animated which is disappointing. The game is at its best when playing against your friends because I found the computer was a lot better than me, even when it was set at the easiest level. Sporting Triangles is a good game for fans of the T.V. show and sport buffs alike.

AS

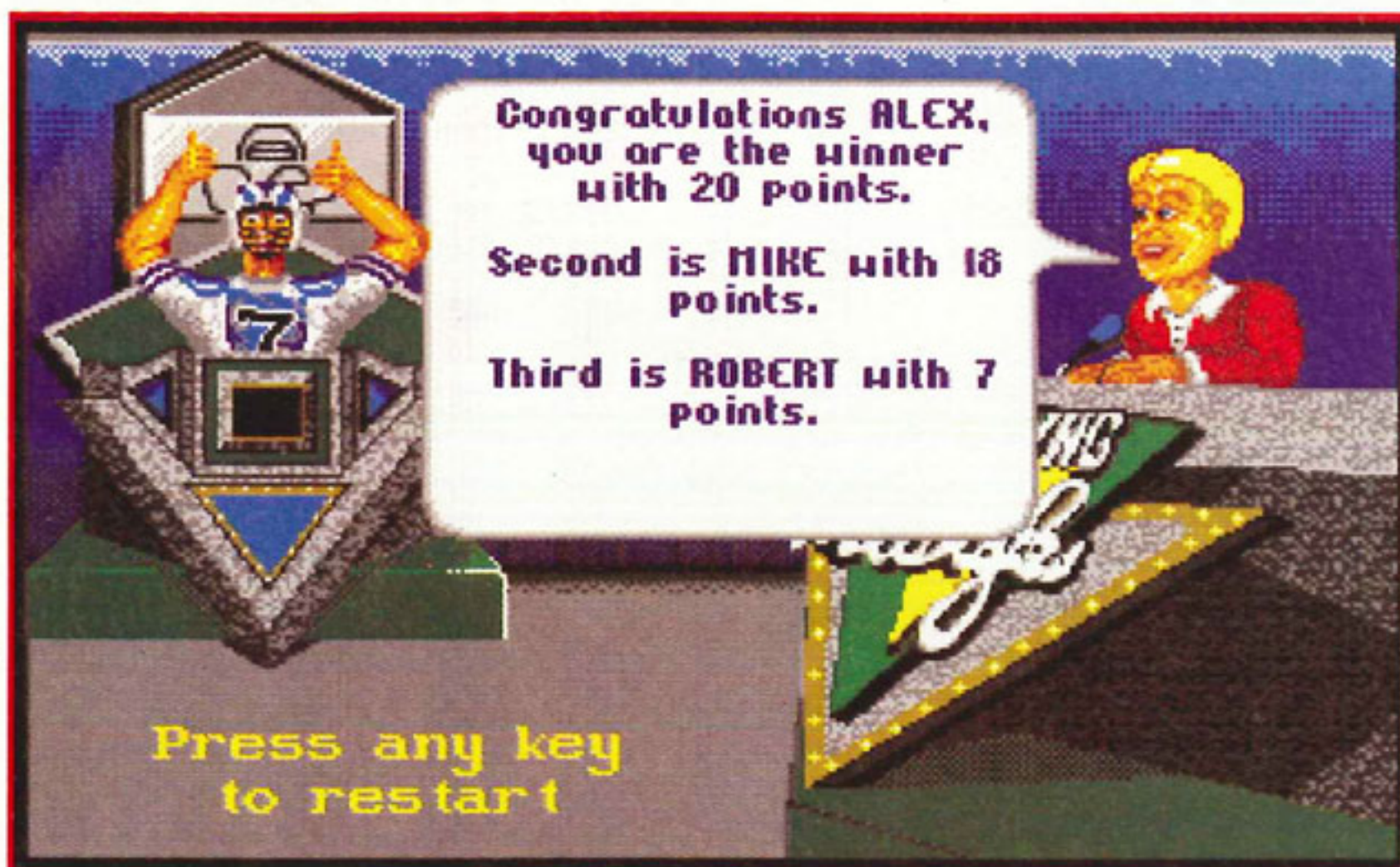


Sporting Triangles is reminiscent of one of those games where you sit at home watching the television and when one of the contestants gets a question wrong, you say to yourself: 'I can do better than that'. Now you can prove to everyone else that you are better than the professionals. Once the game has loaded, you are given the choice of how many human competitors you want to play against: either one, two or three. Then the screen prompts you to enter each of the player's names. If you only choose one or two human friends, the computer will generate the amount of players to complete the line-up of three. It's no good trying to play against a computer opponent if it is going to beat you every time, so you can set the computer's level of difficulty to either average, good or perfect. To see who goes first, a die is rolled by pressing the fire button for each player and whoever gets the highest roll starts off. Before you have questions fired at you, though, you have to select

I can't say I'm a great fan of Sporting Triangles, as whenever I see Nick Owen, I want to kick the telly in. However, this computer interpretation of the show doesn't feature him, so already it has something going for it. Presentation-wise, the game is good, with a recognisable intro tune and colourful graphics, but unless you are a complete and utter sports freak, I don't think that it will appeal to you. The questions were extremely difficult, and I don't think I answered more than two in a row! Because of this, I can only recommend Sporting Triangles to devout fans of the TV show.

SM

After battling your way past the other competitors and becoming the ultimate winner, the question-master congratulates you on your victory.



"So you think you're good at questions about sport do you? Test yourself with CDS software's Sporting Triangles."

SPORTING TRIANGLES

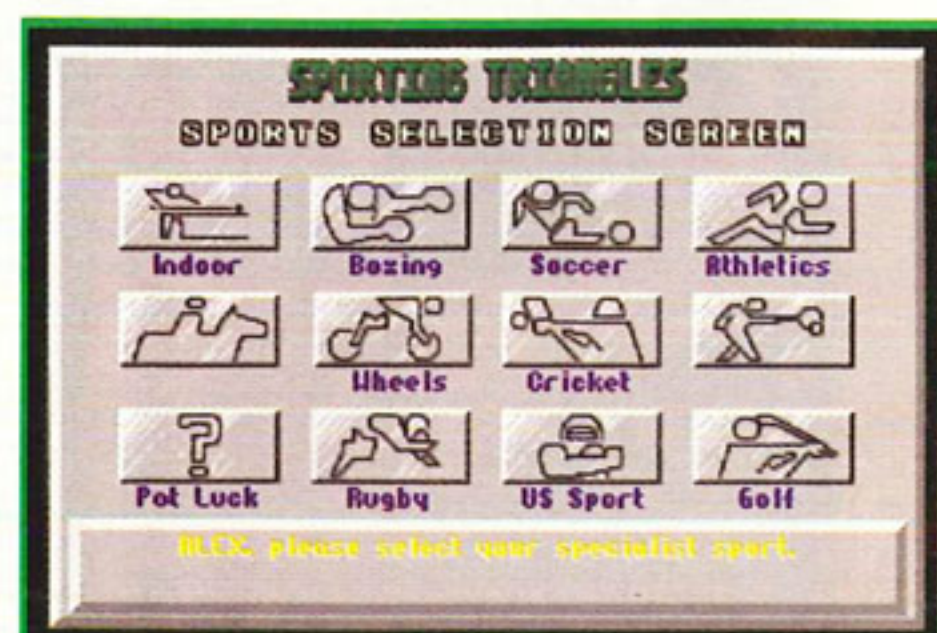
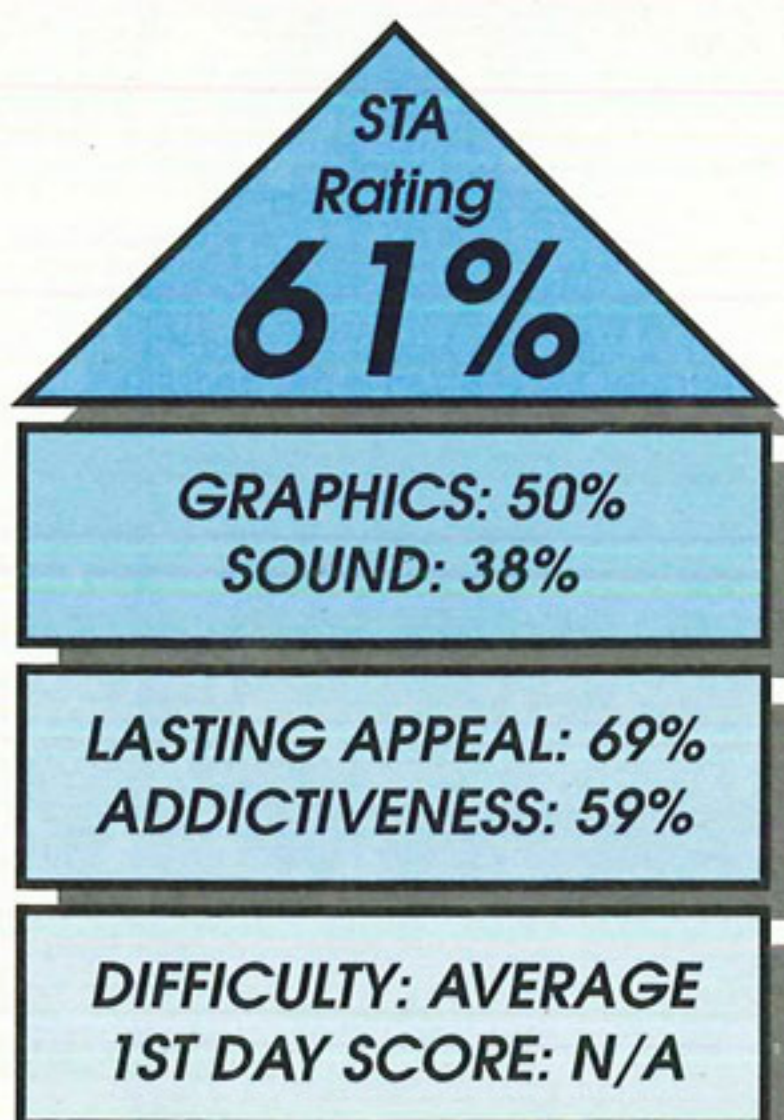
CDS (£19.95)

the amount of time for each round, ranging from as little as one second to unlimited time.

Now it's time for the actual game. In total there are seven rounds: four standard question rounds, a hit-for-six round, a jigsaw picture round and, finally, the quick fire-question round. In the first round it's a case of answering your question within a specific time limit (set by you earlier in the game), and if you do so you are awarded with two points. You have to be honest with this game, because when asked a question you have a choice of replies, either to answer the question or give up. If you choose to answer the question, it tells you the

correct answer and asks you if you were correct, your reply being either 'yes' or 'no'. Then comes the 'Hit-for-Six' round where you are given seven answers and a question at the top of the screen. If you get the question right first time you get six points. On the other hand, if you get it wrong, the question changes and you only get five points for a question, and so on. After this is the Jigsaw round and, like the Hit-for-Six round, you have a possible seven answers. Each time you answer the question wrongly, that answer will disappear and you will have another chance to answer that question. Select the correct answer and you have completed the jigsaw and it's on to the last round, the quick-fire round. Each player is allocated a 'buzzer' (either the Z, V or M key on the keyboard) and to answer a question you have to press your buzzer. At the end of this round, the computer adds up the final scores and the winner is congratulated by the questionmaster.

STA



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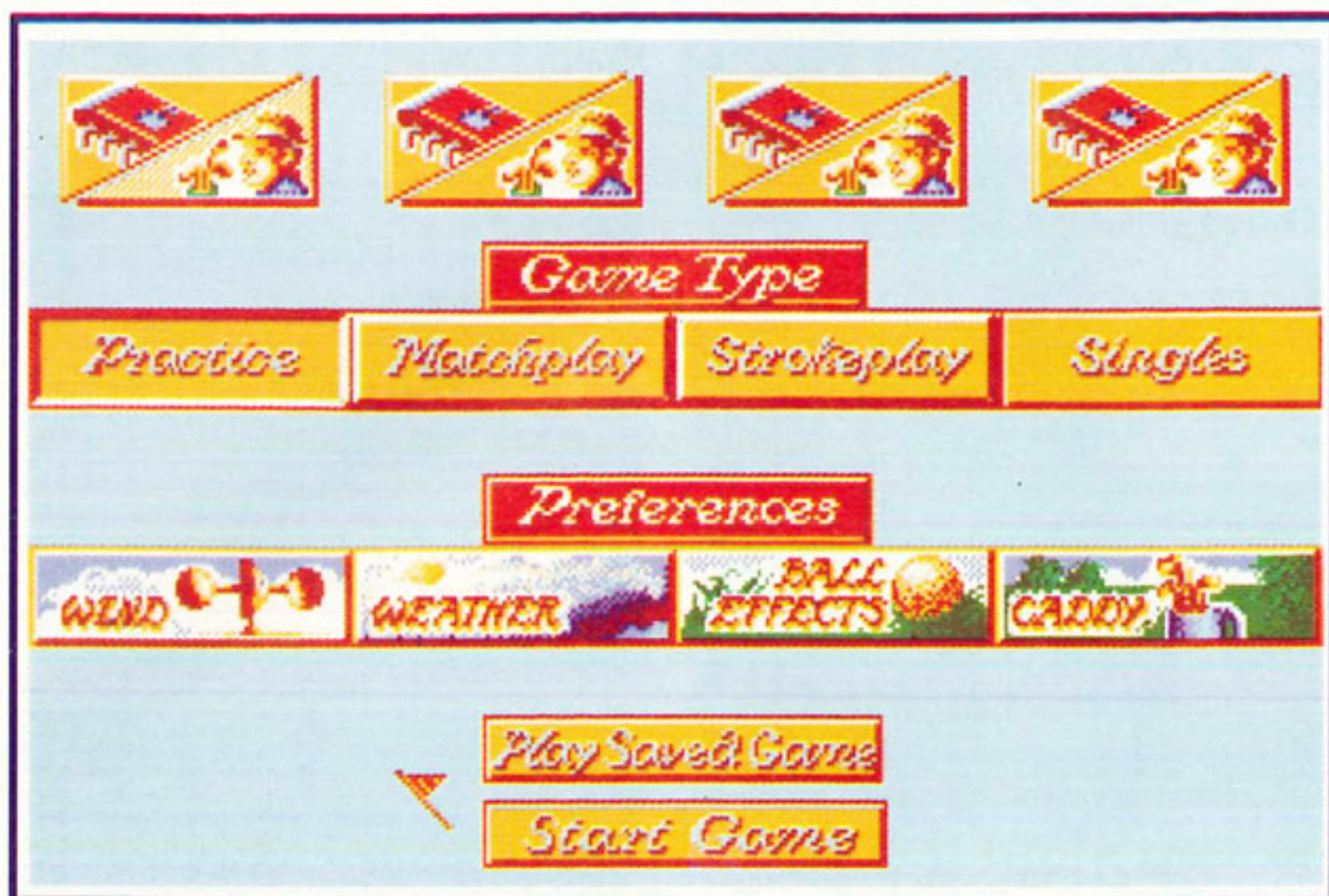


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A daunting option screen calls upon you to enrol players and set skill and handicap figures for each player. From here you can choose to practise any aspect of your game or jump straight into a tournament situation.



Undoubtedly, comparisons will be made between Gremlin's *Ultimate Golf* and U.S. Gold's best-selling *Leaderboard*. Having enjoyed the latter for quite sometime now, I was looking forward to playing the *Ultimate Golf* game. Sure enough, Gremlin's game is far more technically based than *Leaderboard*: the programmers have included nearly every possible factor relating to the game. I especially liked the handicap idea. Graphically and sonically, the game is well presented. However, my only complaint is that, because of the numerous parameters, the game can become somewhat over complicated and the spontaneity enjoyed with the likes of *Leaderboard* lost. All in all, *Ultimate Golf* is exactly that - the ultimate golf game for the ST.

NC

ULTIMATE GOLF - SHARK ATTACK

"Ultimate Golf - Shark Attack? Strange title! Whatever it means, I'm keeping well away from any water on the course!"

GREMLIN (£19.95)

Golf has always been a difficult sport to simulate, but Access's brilliant *Leaderboard* is one of the all-time best sellers. However, endorsed by Greg Norman, 'The Great White Shark' (oh, that's where the shark-attack bit comes in), Gremlin are claiming that they have produced the ultimate golf simulation - have they improved on the handicap? There are numerous factors to consider when trying to emulate golf accurately, because the flight of a ball is affected by so many elements. Gremlin say that with 'professional advice' they have endeavoured to include as many of these factors

as possible, by simulating actual holes on real courses, with the correct amount of foliage, undulations and other physical features of the course. They've even simulated the typical weather conditions at a specific venue. The first screen displays a daunting array of icons and there's a choice of keyboard, joystick or mouse, with the latter being the only serious choice.

Enrolling the players in the Database, human or computer-controlled, you then set the individual handicap number and skill of your opponents. Factors such as

the strength, fitness and effectiveness of stance and grip are all taken into consideration - my particular handicap is that I don't own any golf clubs. Talking of clubs, you must then choose a selection of woods and irons for the match - of course, effective club selection is an important aspect of the game. Then, with sliding bars, you can set parameters such as, play being effected by wind and weather conditions. Additionally, opting for 'ball effects' means that the ball can be affected by the elements already described. Now you can opt for practice sessions on

STA
Rating

70%

GRAPHICS: 67%
SOUND: 40%

LASTING APPEAL: 78%
ADDICTIVENESS: 70%

DIFFICULTY: HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A



Club selection is an all-important aspect of the game. You must choose a selection of woods, irons and a putter to take out on the course.

I must agree with Gremlin's boast that this is the most realistic golf simulation ever - but that wouldn't be too difficult to achieve considering how few other golfing titles there are. But what I must question is the claim that it is the ultimate golfing game, which suggests that there is, and never will be, anything to beat it. Admittedly, the program is packed with realistic detail covering every aspect of the game; which is all very commendable. But the problem is, there is just too much detail and this chokes the flow of the gameplay. Not only that, after the long-winded preparation for the shot, you don't actually feel involved in the final swing. Graphically it is very impressive and the program, as a whole, is professionally finished. But I will be playing Leaderboard long after I lose interest in this game. However, I do recommend the program to those who play real golf seriously, as the detailed build-up to the shots will enable them to study and dissect their game. Very realistic, very slick, but choked with detail.

JS

There is only one game to compare Ultimate Golf-Shark Attack with and that is Access's Leaderboard. For me, Ultimate Golf does not improve on Leaderboard at all, except, perhaps, graphically, but I still prefer the old Leaderboard set-up. Ultimate Golf is closer to the game, though because you have to choose the club, the angle at which to hit the ball, the amount of spin put on the ball and the power of the shot, whereas in Leaderboard you only have to select the club, power direction and spin. This makes Ultimate Golf too complicated for my liking but I think other people, especially those interested in golf, would enjoy it.

AS

Swing is all important in this game and this screen allows you to set the power of swing as well as putting spin on the ball.



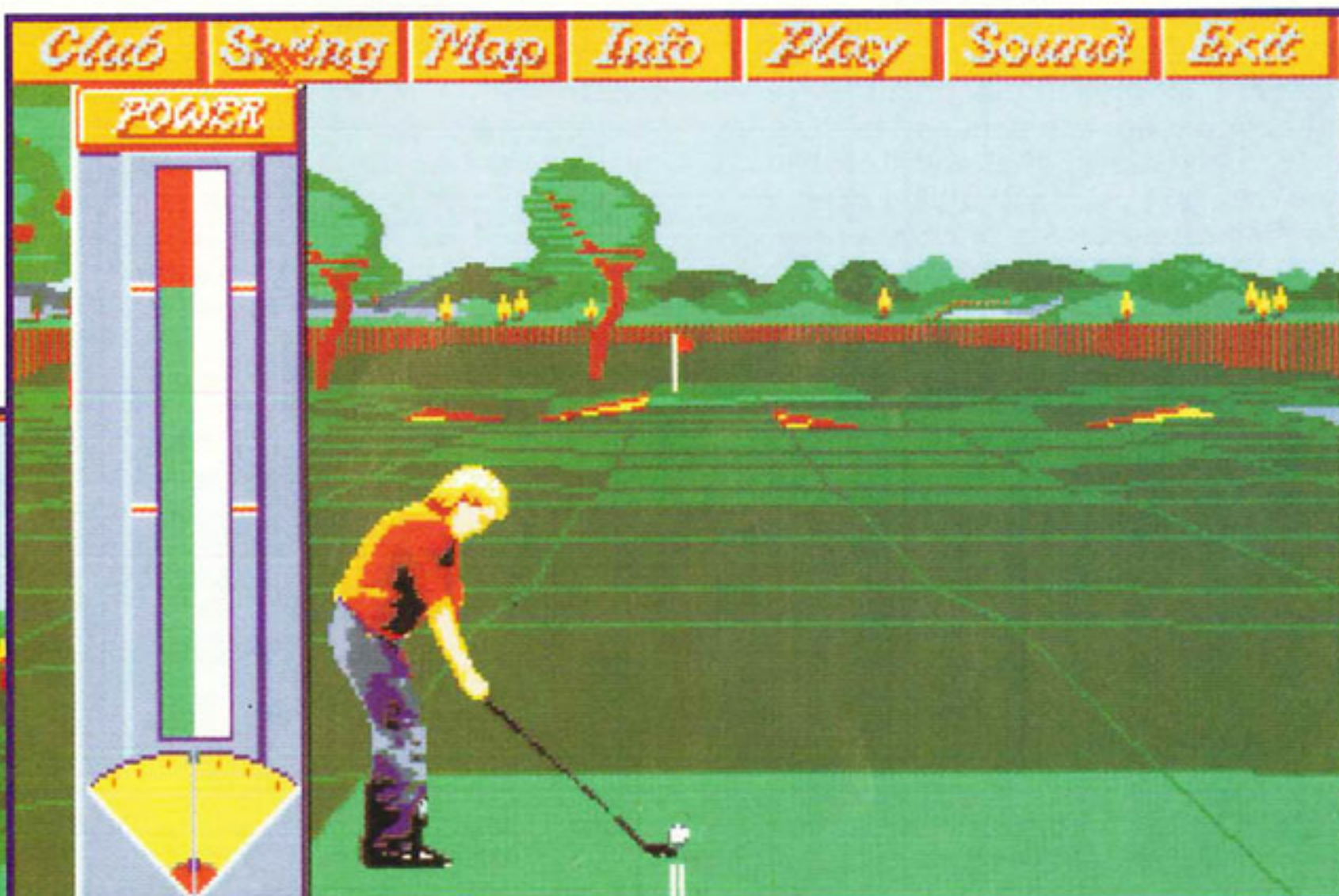
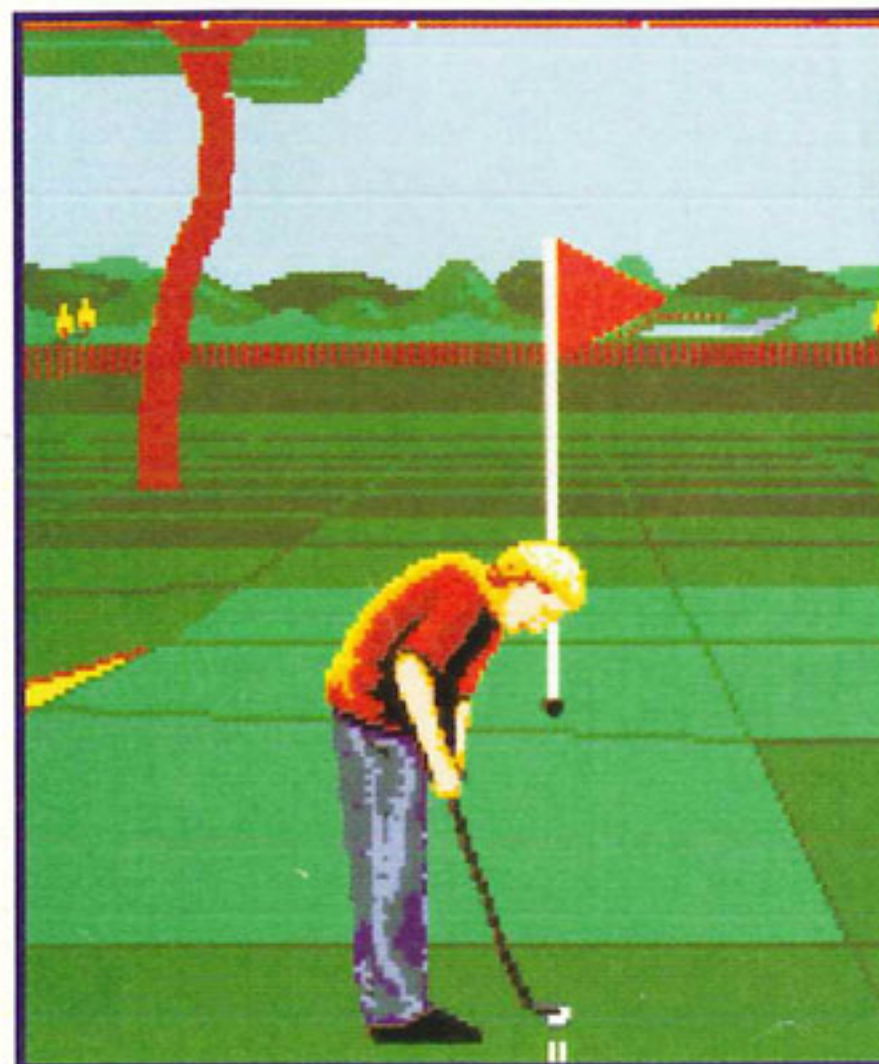
and releasing it stops it at the desired power-rate percentage. Meanwhile, a bar drops down and you must align your shot before it drops to the bottom. Now you turn your attention to the all-important Direction Indicator which is positioned beneath the power gauge. If you mistime the shot, the ball will be sliced or hooked. All being well, the pixelized Mr. Norman will thwack the ball down the fairway.

You move down the course to the ball, and now you have to set all those factors again in preparation for the next shot. Finally, on the green, you play the shot in the same, long-winded way, except that there is no direction meter to worry about. Here, you must select 'Turn' from the menu and line up the shot until your line-of-sight is aligned with the hole. Alternatively, you can use the swing In/Out feature. **STA**

the fairway and green, or enter straight into the tournament. Practice provides you with control over the courses parameter, and shots can be played and replayed again. Meanwhile, in the 'Strokeplay' option, the number of shots taken are entered on the score-card and the computer estimates the handicaps.

Now we walk out on the course, and as the fairway unfolds before you, ol' Greggory Norman steps up to the tee. Before the shot, you can gain information about the hole such as the length of the fairway, the selected club, as well as the maximum distance the ball could travel, and you can even call up a map of the course. After considering the course information, clicking on the Clubs icon enables you to select the best club for the job - a certain amount of golf knowledge is

required to know how a specific club will hit the ball. Next, selecting 'Swing' enables you to set spin on the ball, as well as the swing arc, both of which affect the flight of the ball. The main screen shows an overhead view of the golfer, and as you fiddle with the icons, the swing-arc alters. Back on the fairway, holding down the mouse-button activates a power gauge



Greggy is poised at the tee, but preparation for the shot isn't over yet. On screen is a power indicator and direction gauge and you must line up these two factors up for the perfect shot.

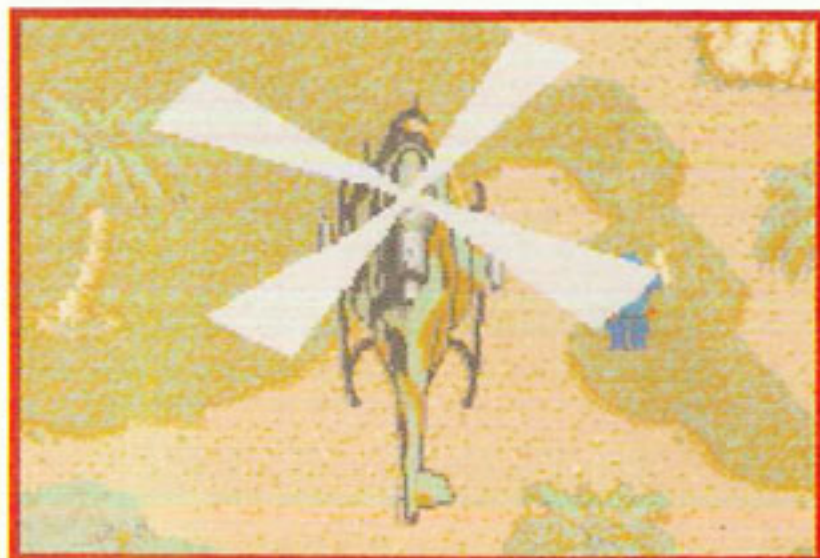
You make it to the green and, selecting the putter, you line up for that crucial final shot. 'Oh bother!' says The Great White Shark: 'Bang goes sixty grand - oh dash it, what a pity!'

"Man, have I seen action! I've fought my way through dozens of pixel-clad jungles, dodged and weaved Charlie's bullets and Fritz's grenades. But this is one campaign I'll never forget!"

Steering, guiding, dodging and diving, you control a crack Commando, Joe, in a long, tiring and lonesome crusade against a massive advancing rebel force. Equipped with no more than an armalite and six grenades, you must take on all the might of a pocket army. From an overhead-view, a Lynx helicopter hovers on screen and lands to allow Joe to hop out. The palms sway violently from the rotor turbulence and, as Joe waves, the chopper disappears and you set your mind to this do-or-die mission. Your first objective is to fight through the rebellion to reach a fortress where an evil despot is planning a rebellion - you must eliminate this tinpot Latin General. The first wave of enemy run out of the jungle from all angles and immediately you are under pressure to keep Joe alive. Dodging the sporadic fire, you must keep on the move, retaliate with a spray of bullets by pressing the firebutton and advance towards the fortress. Although you only have six grenades, there's a limitless supply of bullets in the magazine.

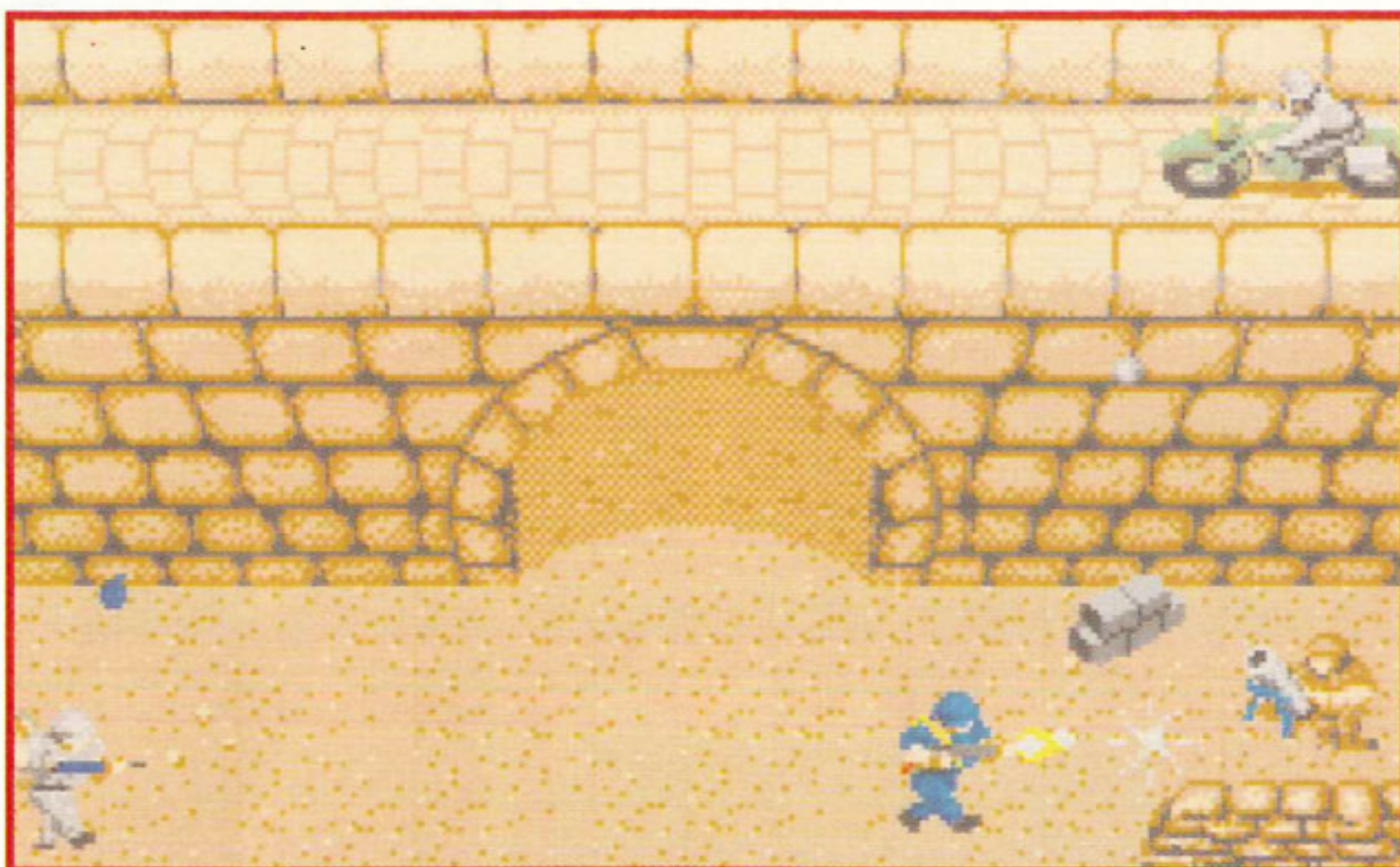
Pushing forward on the joystick, Joe runs into more trouble and Charlie tears out of the bush, firing bullets which whizz past Joe's ears. Full concentration must be paid at all times to eliminate the rebels - there's no time to ask questions. Joe's a real roughy-toughy, but it only takes one high-velocity bullet to put him out of action - fortunately, he has six lives which is a bit handy. Further into the jungle, more troops make their presence known and this time they've got back-up from snipers and mortar fire - but that's nothing that a well-lobbed grenade can't put right: a long press of the firebutton and Joe pitches a grenade into the circle of sandbags, sending one unfortunate Charlie dancing in a shower of shrapnel.

Joe reaches a bridge. On one side a mortar launcher; on the road above, a motorbiker is chucking grenades, and on the other side a veritable firing squad is waiting to turn Joe into a colander. Lobbing a grenade, you eliminate the mortar launch and run through the arch-



Dodgin', weavin', duckin', 'n' firin' is the only way to survive in this war. Joe finally reaches the fortress and sets his sights on the crazy Latin General

Joe embarks on a lone fight against a sizable pocket army - his mission, to eliminate an evil despot and quash the rebellion. The general feel of the game is very similar to the coin-op. Here, Joe wastes a mortar launcher and dives under the bridge into a volley of fire.



COMMANDO

ELITE (£19.99)

The original Commando launched what must be one of the most prolific genres in the eight-bit market, and in the arcades it was a monster hit. Now, the coin-op conversion hits the ST screens and how! To all intents and purposes, this is the arcade game on an ST screen. The screen size has been reduced from the arcade version, but the visual and sonic presentation, as well as the general feel of the game, is a remarkably accurate interpretation of the coin-op. If you're a Commando-game vet then this is a must - pure, addictive gameplay and a real treat to review one of my all-time favourites.

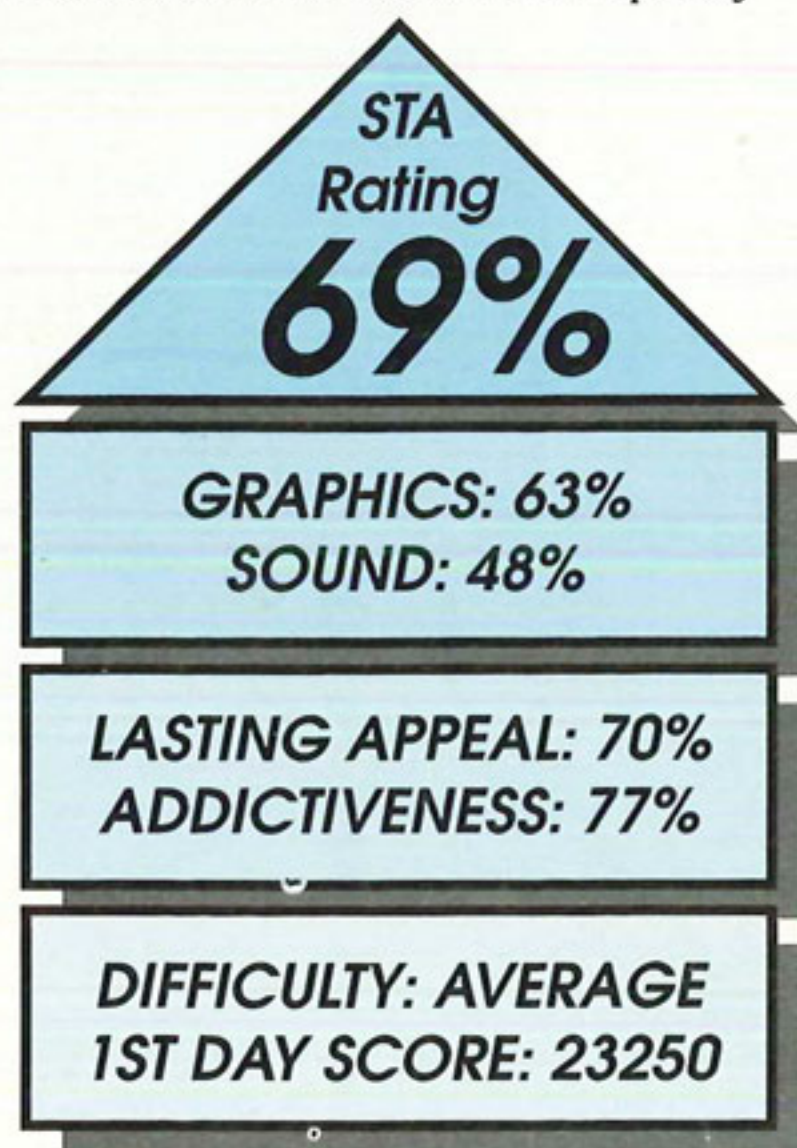
JS

way, hell-bent for glory. Surrounded by snipers you must dodge, weave, fire, - dodge, weave, fire - one lapse of concentration and you're dead. Finally, you reach the fortress; the big steel doors open and out floods the General's personal bodyguards and dozens of crazed minions just run into a volley of bullets. Then, dressed in green, the General and two officials make a run for it - quickly

you aim and fire, ignoring a spray of bullets ripping across Joe's back - the General drops to the ground - mission accomplished.

The mission in each level grows progressively more difficult with a bigger and better equipped army, until eventually Joe's up against heavy artillery and armoured vehicles; which takes the overall task into the realms of impossibility.

STA



Now here is a game that I have not played in ages, but now I can play it to my heart's content. I thoroughly enjoyed playing Elite's Commando, even if it is an old blast from the past. Graphically, Commando does not break any records, but for a game of this type they are adequate. The sound could have been improved as there are only a few explosions and the like. The best thing about Commando is its immense playability; it's so easy to get addicted. If you are looking for a simple shoot'em-up, I recommend you take a close look at Commando.

AS

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ST ACTION, JANUARY

STAI

GHOULS'N'GHOSTS

"Hang out your cloves of garlic, draw the curtains, and dim the lights, because Arthur, the brave knight, is here - and he's brought a spooky entourage with him..."

US GOLD (£19.99)

I am a great fan of this style of game, but Ghouls'n'Ghosts has got to be one of the best of the genre yet. It is just about as close to the coin-op as it could have been, with the small but detailed graphics and jaunty tune translating relatively well, and the frantic gameplay remaining intact. From the word go, Ghouls is non-stop action, and cutting a path through the hundreds of zombies, vultures and creatures is one of the best ways I can think to spend an afternoon. I particularly liked the little touches, such as the wizard who turns you into a duck, that have been kept from the original game, and it is attention to detail like this that puts Ghouls head and shoulders above its competition. Whether you like this style of game or not, buy Ghouls'n'Ghosts and prepare for some of the most addictive gameplay ever witnessed on the ST.

SM

It is five years since brave Arthur the knight had his lovely fiancée kidnapped by the demons of the underworld. After much running, jumping, and sword-throwing, Arthur had battled through the five stages of the King demon's lair, before finally rescuing his true love, and killing the evil being in the process - or so he

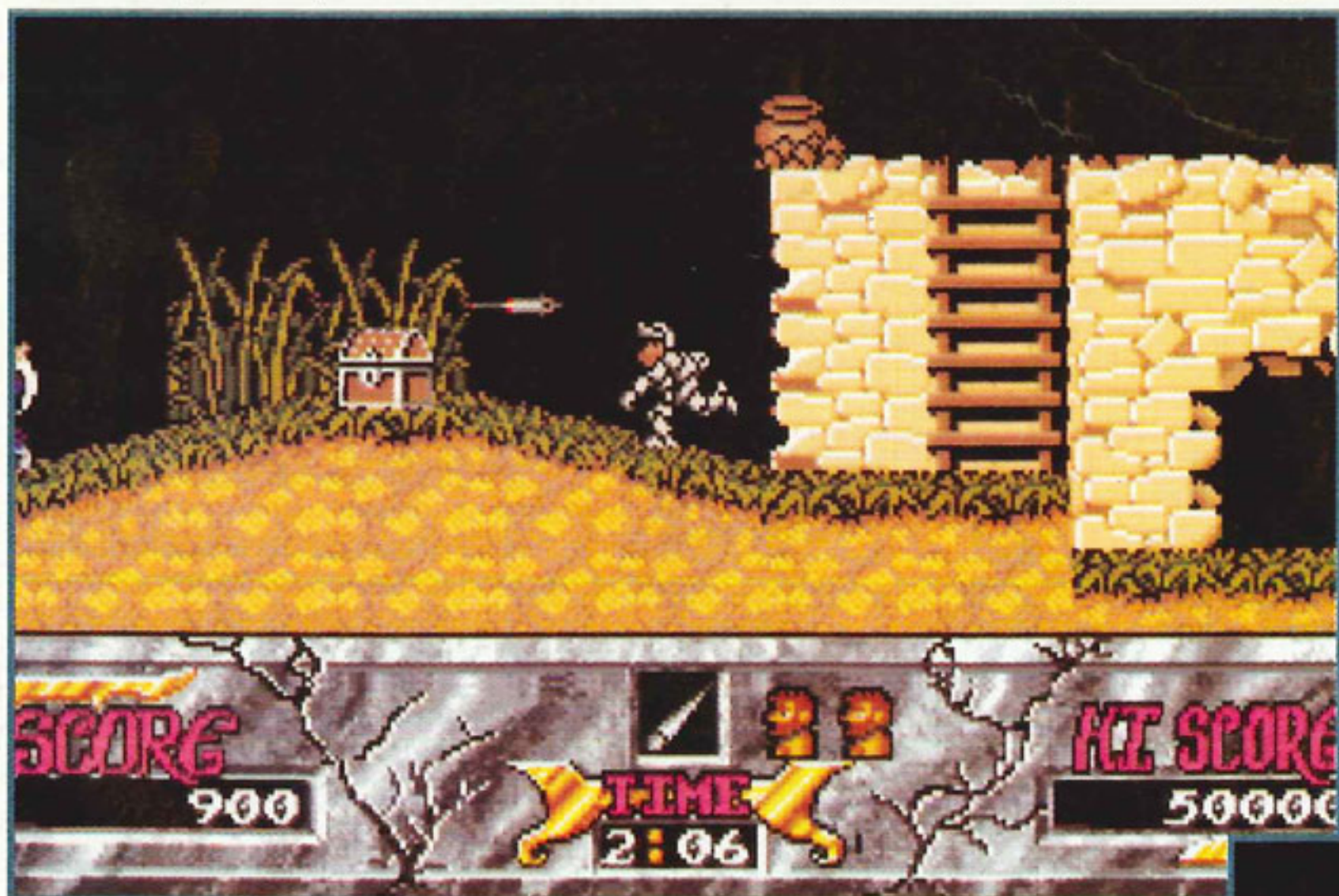
thought. For, one day, Arthur's life of normality was shattered as, once again, the evil creature returned from the grave, whisking our brave hero's bride-to-be away with him. In his first adventure, Arthur had to traverse the horizontally-scrolling domain of the demon, avoiding the deadly intentions of globule-spitting

Ghoulies and ghosties, and things that go bump in the night! That's what U.S. Gold's latest Capcom conversion is all about. I, for one, would have thought that the brave knight, Arthur, had encountered enough supernatural beasties in his first adventure, Ghouls'n'Goblins. Still, platform fanatics will be especially pleased at his return. In short, Ghouls'n'Ghosts is a first-rate game. The game's graphics are crisp and well drawn, while the accompanying music is some of the most impressive I've ever heard on the ST. The game certainly isn't easy, but that should encourage the more determined of you to try even harder. Overall, Ghouls'n'Ghosts is an excellent conversion of a simple, yet addictive, game.

NC

icicles, knight-eating plants and snake like dragons. This sequel follows the same pattern, except that this time the evil demon has recruited a larger army of even deadlier and more varied cronies. Despite his original adventure never appearing on the Amiga, Arthur the knight's second and biggest adventure is finally here, courtesy of Capcom and U.S. Gold. Converted from the original coin-op by Software Creations, the team behind other Capcom classics, such as LED Storm and Bionic Commando, Ghouls'n'Ghosts recreates all of the platform-laden action of Arthur's five-stage adventure.

The game begins with Arthur standing at the entrance to a spooky forest-surrounded graveyard. The game is entirely joystick-controlled, with the directional controls enabling Arthur to jump, crouch and run, whilst the firebutton releases one of our armour-clad hero's weapons. From the starting point of each of the game's five stages, Arthur must run from left to right. As he does so, though, all manner of strange demons, zombies and ghouls



As Arthur begins his quest for love, he stumbles across a tiny chest. Firing at it, he is horrified to see a moustached wizard appear and - ABRACADABRA! - our armour-clad hero is transformed into a duck! Luckily, though, the effect is only temporary.



STA
Rating
80%

GRAPHICS: 71%
SOUND: 68%

LASTING APPEAL: 79%
ADDICTIVENESS: 81%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

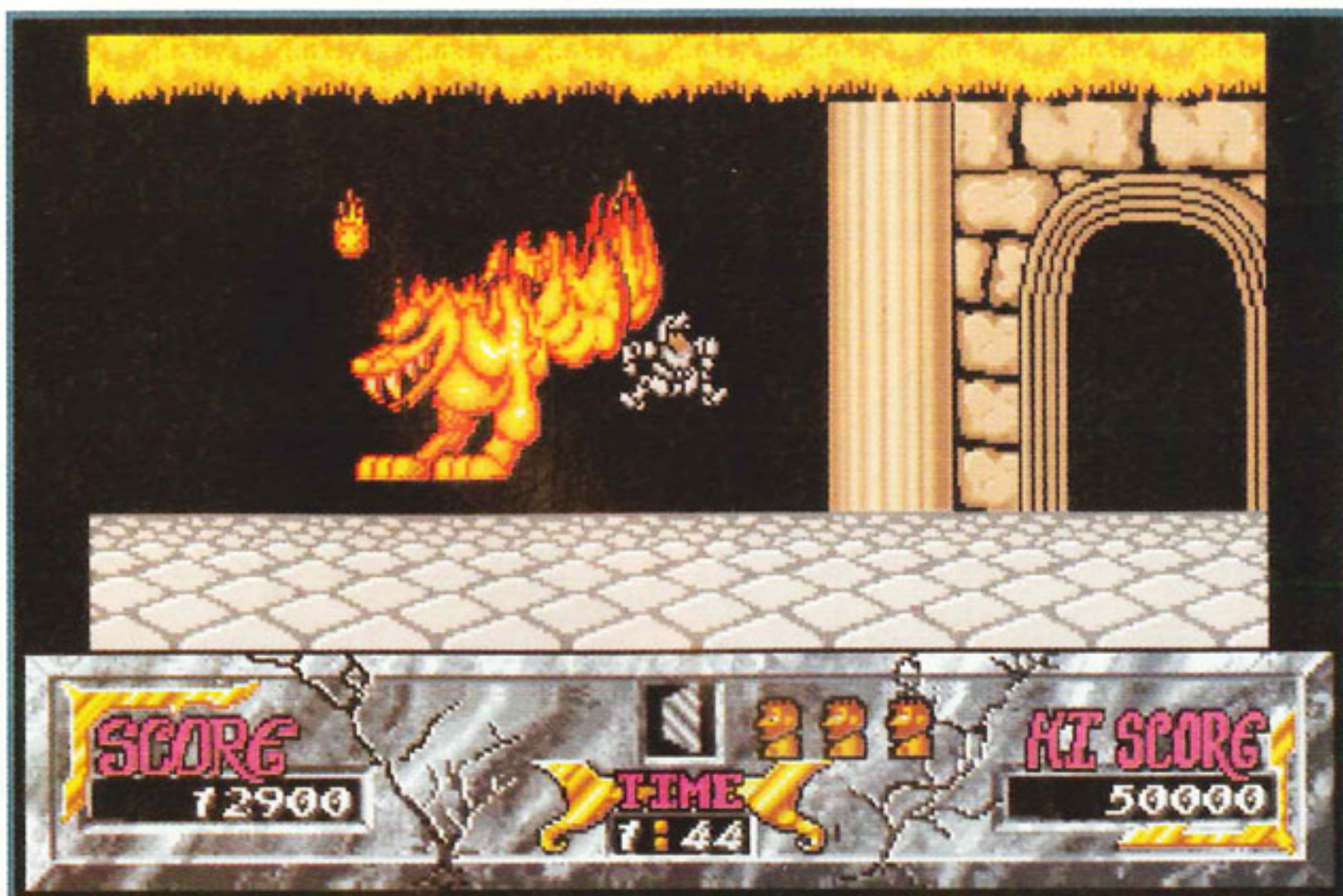
When Ghouls'n'Ghosts arrived in the office I was quite looking forward to playing it, having played its predecessor, Ghosts and Goblins. When I switched on I wasn't disappointed either. The game is virtually the same as the first one, except that the maps have been changed, which is fairly obvious. Arthur the Knight has remained his same old self, still losing his armour on the first hit and losing a life on the second. The game is immensely playable, as well as having a good little tune playing along and some very pretty graphics. If I wanted to buy a platform romp in this sort of mould, I think Ghouls 'n Ghosts would be the one for me.

AS

will rise from the grave in an attempt to grab our little knight. Contact with the foul undead results in a shocked Arthur leaping out of his crumbling armour to fight another day, but if any of the demon's followers touch him again, he loses one of his three lives. As Arthur makes his way through the deadly guillotines, vultures and other undead hazards, some will often relinquish extra weapons when killed. Extra suits of armour and the like are probably the most useful enhancement, but throwable weapons, including axes, razor-sharp disks and firebombs can be collected. Each weapon has its advantages and disadvantages; for instance, the axes tend to fly in an upward arc, often missing their intended target, whilst the firebombs can't be thrown very far. The armour enhancements, on the other hand, are exceptionally useful, and range from a 'mega-suit' which is resistant to a number of hits, to a ghostly doppelganger who can be used to decoy the attacking hordes.

At the end of each stage is a massive locked iron door. Behind this door lies the next individually-loaded level, but before you can gain access to it, you must enter battle with one of the demon's giant key-

Face to face with the hell-hound that guards the end of the second level, Arthur fires lance after lance into it.



Trying to get a grip on the icy surfaces is far from easy, especially since you keep sliding back! To combat your descent back, though, you can jump along the incline - all the while avoiding the unwanted attentions of the ice demons.



A semi-clad Arthur dashes through rain into the spooky forest. However, he must be careful not to come into contact with another creature, or he'll lose one of his three lives.

masters. Ranging from a giant hound made of fire to a green spikey-haired ogre, these leap up and down and spew fire in an attempt to kill our hero. Avoiding its shifting bulk and its many fireballs, you must continually shoot at it. When a sufficient number of shots have hit home, the guardian will eventually explode into a ball

of flames, releasing the key in the process. All that remains now is to collect the key and exit through the massive door. Any time remaining on the time-limit will then be added to your score, and you will be ready to start the next stage.

ROLLER COASTER RUMBLER

STA
Rating
63%

GRAPHICS: 63%
SOUND: 55%

LASTING APPEAL: 62%
ADDICTIVENESS: 60%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 13275

Roller Coaster Rumbler (R.C.R. for short) does look impressive graphically, being the only game of this kind that I know of. The speed of the game is slow at times but it speeds up at the bottom of the hills. The enemy aren't particularly well drawn or animated, most of them being a ball on the end of a line, and their only movement is to swing from one side to another. I think that there are better solid 3D games on the market at the moment, but if you have these and are looking for a new 3D blast, take a look into Roller Coaster Rumbler.

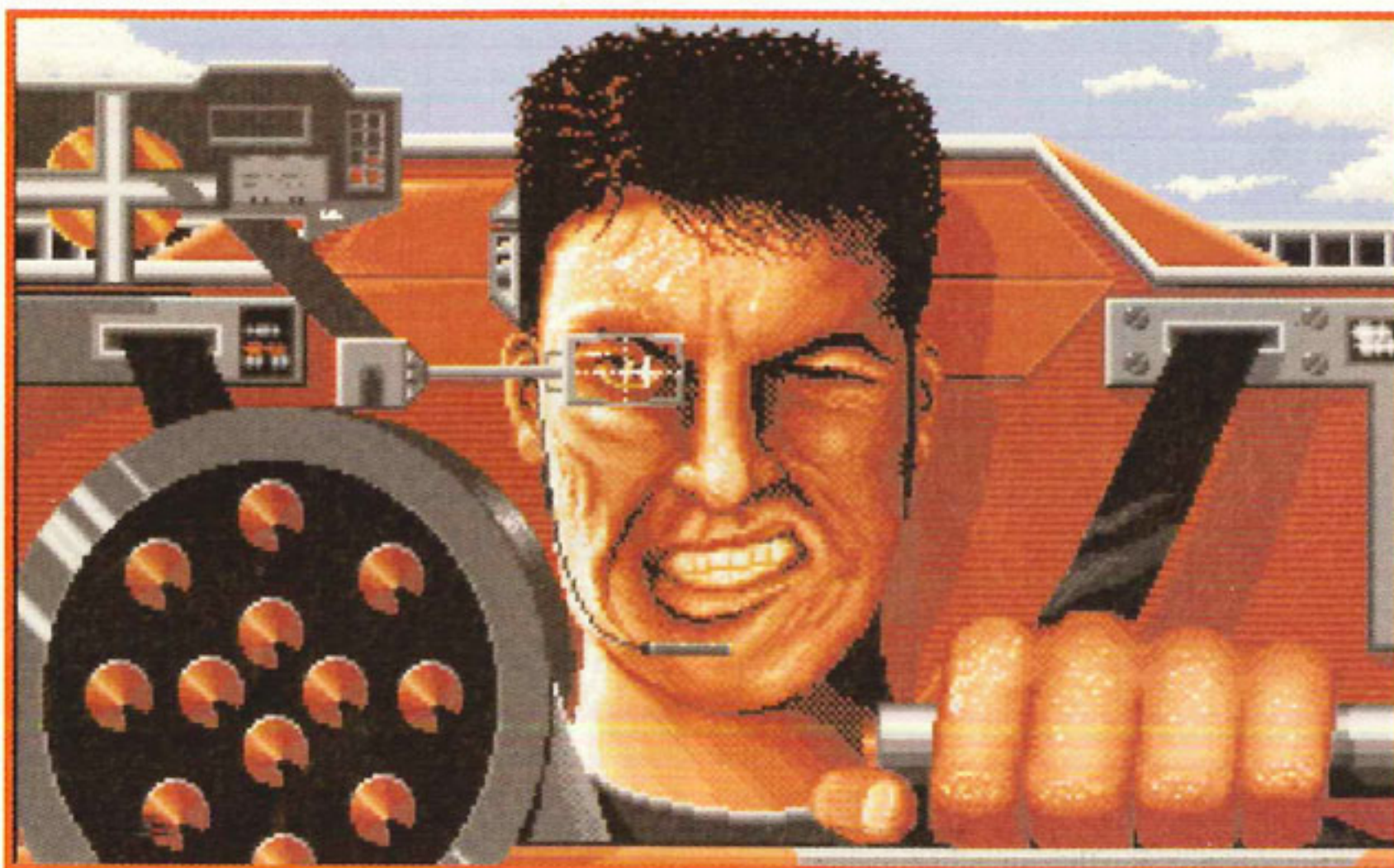
AS

Are you afraid of dizzying heights? Queasy at the thought of plunging a hundred feet in just a few seconds? Well, are you? If you're not even bothered by the thought of this, Tynesoft recommend Roller Coaster Rumbler to you, the totally

"Imagine zooming around on a roller coaster shooting everything in sight. You have just imagined Tynesoft's Roller Coaster Rumbler."

--- ■■■ TYNESOFT (£19.99) ■■■ ---

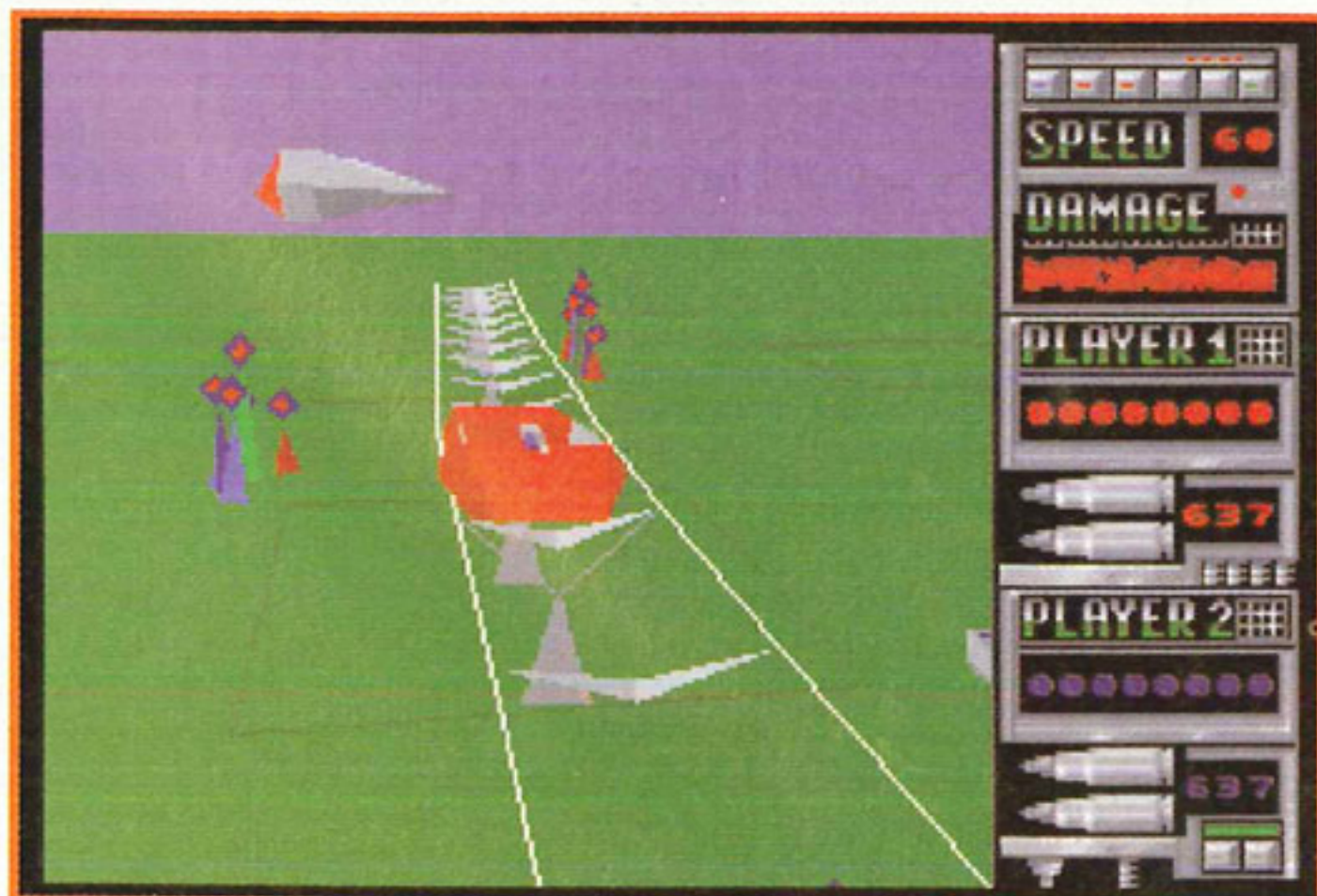
Strap yourself in and get ready for the off, because the enemy is not going to wait around for you when the game starts.



radical rumbler. You start the game by drifting down into your car in true 3D style and, when seated, a close-up of your face shows you preparing for battle. Then it's out on to the tracks and we're ready to rock and roll! The carriage slowly gains speed as it climbs up the first slope and then the waves of enemy start to attack. Swinging balls attempt to deplete your energy and knock you from the track; aircraft fly high above dropping bombs to impede your progress. But that is nothing to what you can do to them. Let rip with your forward and aft-mounted cannons to blow your opponents into smithereens, leaving fragments of their craft scattered around the play screen. Sure, shooting the enemy is fun, but soon you're going to run out of ammunition and time's running out. Extra bullets can be gained every so often by blasting away at a large 'A' hung on the

side of the track, and speed is gained every time you go down a slope. Instead of being alone out there on the track, why not take along a friend to share in the enjoyment of making the scum eat lead. If, after a lot of blasting and a lot of ammunition being used, you manage to defeat all of the opposition on that level, it's onto the second where the enemy become more plentiful in numbers and more devious, so you had better watch out, or it's the end of the line for you.

STA



In the midst of the action, you will get attacked by bombs falling from above, rammed from the front and even knocked off the track by a swinging ball.

This is a clever 3D demo of a roller-coaster which demonstrates the virtues of 3D, and if the game is anything, it is original. But whilst playing the game, I could almost imagine the designers emphasising to publishers how you can 'look to the front to see where you're going and look from the back to see where you've been' - not exactly an original trick. The gameplay is rather bland and unchanging, and after rattling along the track for ten minutes or so, you really have experienced the extent of what this game has to offer. One of many impressive 3D effects around at the moment, but it just hasn't got the gameplay to back it up.

JS

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"We interrupt this magazine to bring you an important message. Wonderland has been overrun by a gang of vicious monsters. We need a hero - quickly!"

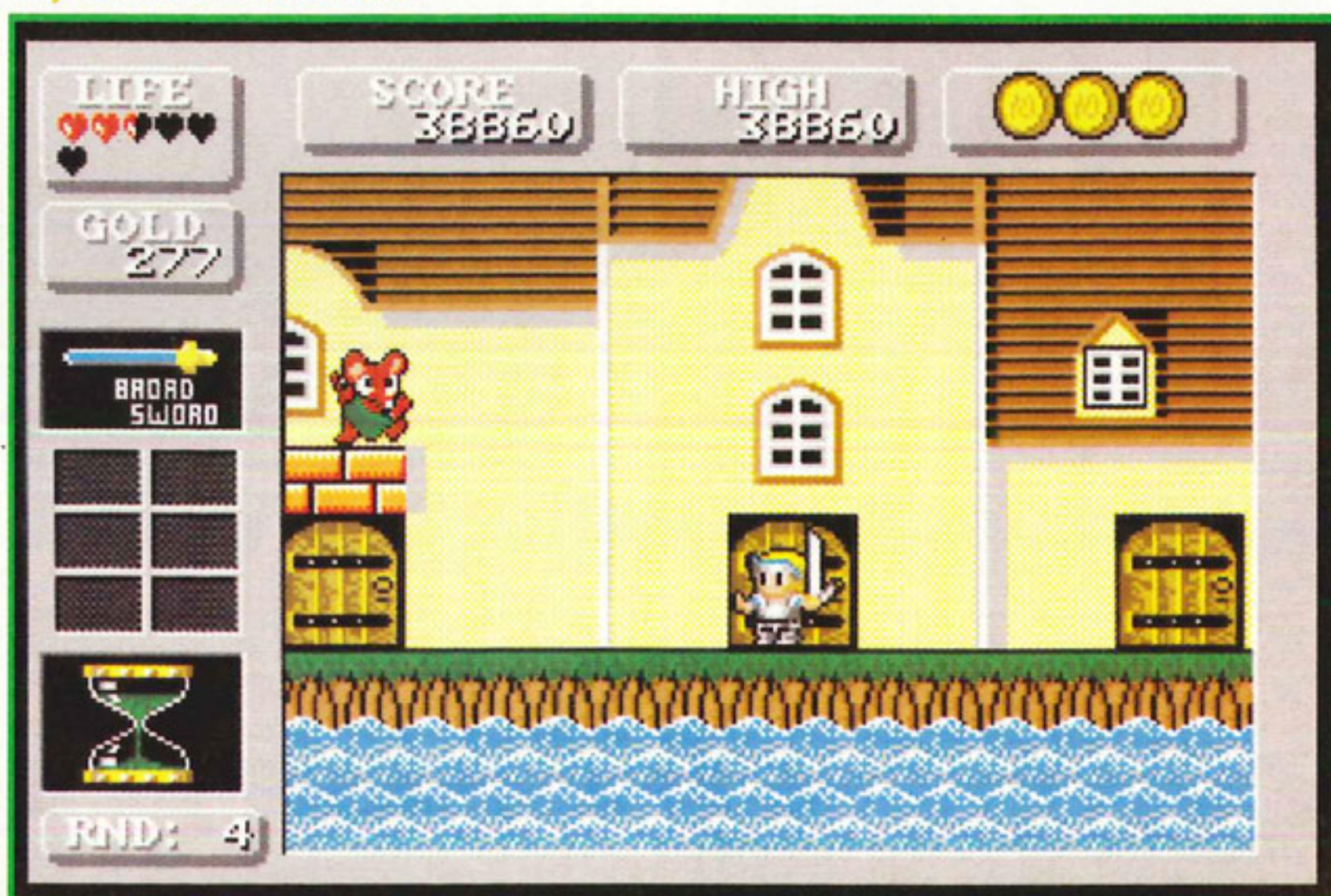
SUPER WONDERBOY

ACTIVISION (£19.95)

The game begins with you, a rather handsome-looking, young, nappy-clad fellow named Tom-Tom, taking a leisurely stroll through Wonderland. As you make your merry way along the path, you come across a rather rundown-looking store. Feeling somewhat hungry, you stop and venture inside the building. You're met by a rather strange looking chap who informs you that Wonderland has fallen under the thrall of an evil dragon called Meka. In order to protect his newly-found domain, the meddlesome monster has strategically placed his minions all over the land. The once happy folk of Wonderland need a saviour, but who can they turn to?

Without pausing for thought, you grab the shopkeeper's sword and magical potion and bound out of the door. Ahead of you lie ten nasty-infested levels, and it isn't until you reach the eleventh stage that you come face to face with the land's tormentor. Roaming freely throughout the lands are all manner of beasties, all with one aim in life - your demise! So, in order to thwart their evil intentions you are armed with a trusty sword. Attacking the creatures is the key to success; as the nasties gasp their dying breath they also release an hourglass, a point-related bonus, or an amount of money. Energy, and eventually life, is lost by coming into contact with the horrors. Positioned at the top of the screen is a row of hearts which slowly depletes as your energy is lost.

Having beaten off countless monsters, Tom-Tom makes his way into a nearby town. With doors all over the place our hero is spoilt for choice as to which shop he should enter. He can afford the best accessories, but choose carefully as you may not need all that's on offer.



However, as well as murdering monsters you also have to complete each level within a given time, depicted by a large hourglass timer in the bottom left of the screen. Of course, extra time can be gained by collecting the hourglass symbols.

Fail to reach the end of a level within the allotted time and one of the life-giving heart symbols will disappear.

Throughout the land there are also a number of stores which you may visit. As you stop outside the shops, depressing the spacebar will cause little Tom-Tom to



Having entered a store, Tom-Tom comes face to face with a happy looking crocodile. On offer is either a cocktail or a beer, each one will get the barman talking, the more expensive one being better value.

I really enjoyed Super Wonderboy in Monsterland. OK, so it won't win any prizes for having stunning graphics or brilliant sampled sound, but nobody can criticise its undeniable playability. Sporting the now customary 'cute'-style graphics, Super Wonderboy features some of the friendliest monsters you're ever likely to meet. The graphics are somewhat basic, leaving the playing area rather bare and uncluttered. Meanwhile, the game's bouncy tune accompanies the action nicely. However, as mentioned, the game's real strength lies in the playability. The overall difficulty of the game has been set just right and gamers everywhere will enjoy Super Wonderboy.

NC



The Red Knight is just one of the key-guarding nasties you might encounter. A number of careful chops to his seemingly impenetrable armour puts paid to his evil plans.



knock politely on the door. Having been invited inside you are asked what you want to purchase. All manner of goods can be bought from the stores. Some sell miracle cures, others clues, but the majority will offer items to aid you in your quest. Missiles in the form of bombs, fireballs or even whirlwinds can be purchased to help you in the slaying of more difficult foes. Meanwhile, shields, swords and boots can also be purchased - these luxury items help protect the valiant hero. In addition to visiting the shops you may, from time to time, find a monster who has stolen a precious item. Killing these monsters will yield invisibility potions, protective helmets and the like.

In order to complete each level, a key must be obtained from one of the nasties. However, as you may have already guessed, the keys aren't guarded by the small easy-to-beat creatures. Oh no, keys are kept by the biggest, baddest and meanest monsters. Only when you've finally put paid to these loathsome beasts can you retrieve the key and make good your escape to the next waiting level. As well as the key-holding fiends, many of the levels are also home to a number of other large sized monsters. Once again, killing these terrible foes will yield a number of coins and a goody.

"Here's another one of those cutesy type games" was my first thought when Super Wonder Boy came into the office; but after loading the game and playing it for a while I found the game really good. It's one of those games that is so addictive you just can't put it down - you just have to have one more go. The graphics are very pretty: I especially liked the way Tom-Tom walks up to a door and knocks on it if you press the bar. Also, there are extra weapons available if you have the money to buy them, so you don't get bored of the same old sword every game. Super Wonder Boy is a superb game, one of the best of its type. If you have the money to buy it, take a look and, if you enjoy it, as I'm sure you would, go and get it now!

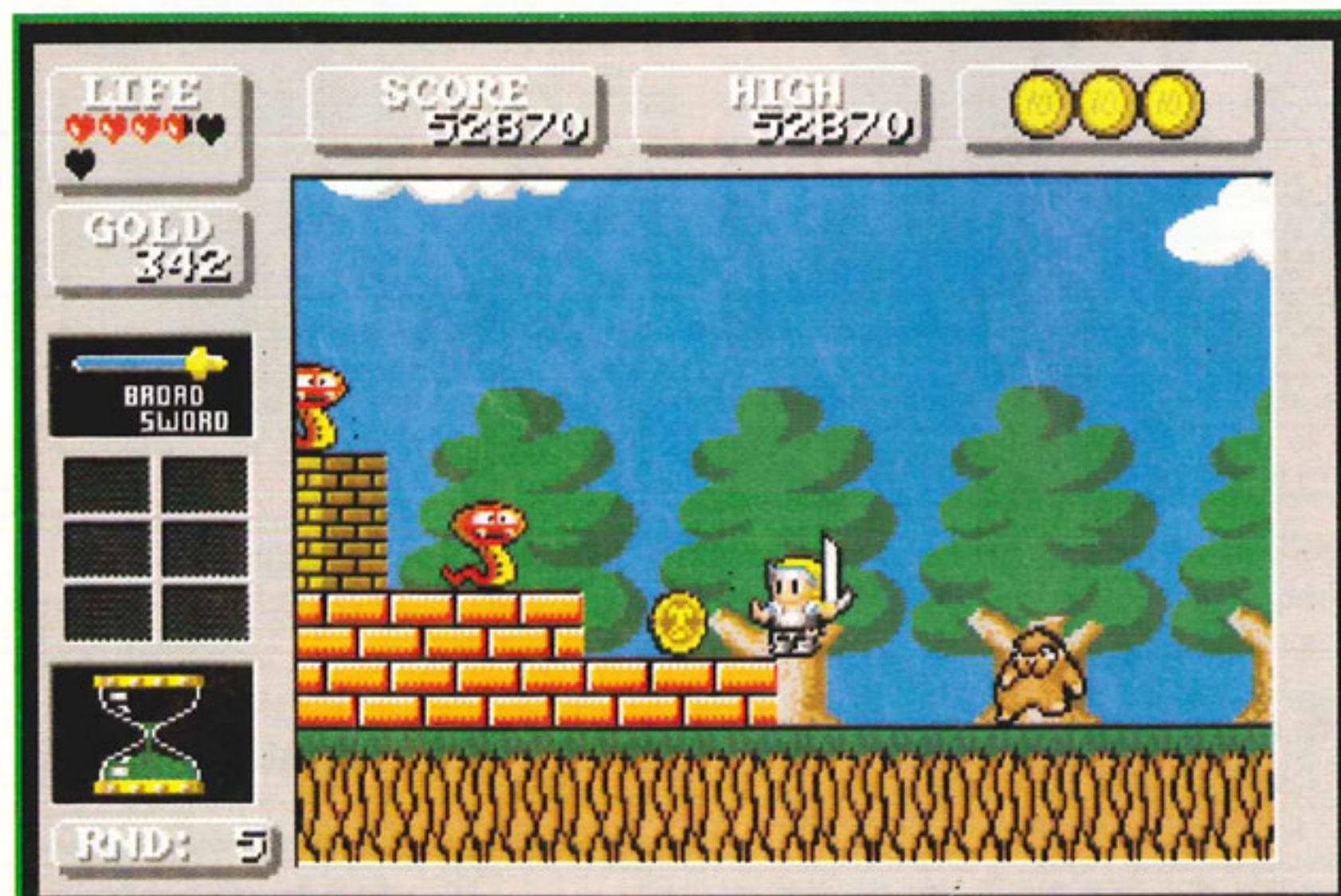
AS

Once Tom-Tom's health bar finally runs out, the brave little hero floats to that great Wonderland in the sky. However, using a credit system, players are given three extra chances to defeat the evil Meka

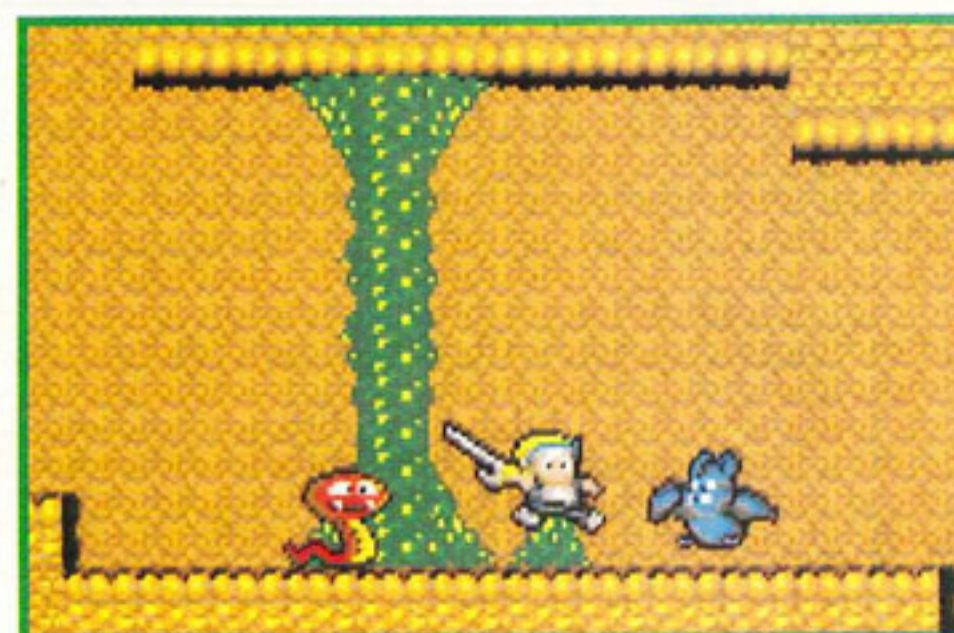
STA

Sadly, Tom-Tom's first adventure never made it to the ST, but Super Wonder Boy is here, and our nappy-clad hero makes his 16-bit debut in this playable little platform romp. The graphics are a little small, and there is no real sound to speak of, but still I keep coming back to play it. Whereas it won't impress anyone when they look at it or see it being played, Super Wonder Boy has to be played to be appreciated. Whilst offering nothing new or innovative, SWB is just a playable little game - nothing more, nothing less - and comes highly recommended.

SM



On killing a venomous viper, Tom-Tom prepares to grab the loot. But beware, several of the deceased monster's friends lie in wait.



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ORIENTAL GAMES



The crashing of bamboo shinai as the Kendo warriors do battle; the stamping feet and pounding flesh of the Sumo wrestlers vying for control of the ring; Kung Fu masters turning inner strength to powerful punches amidst a flurry of scissor-kicks; and the no-holds barred brawling of street corner Freestyle.



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Miyamoto Mushasi, Japanese swordsman of the seventeenth century.

Unit 1, Hampton Road Industrial Estate, Tetbury, Glos. GL8 8DA. Tel: 0666 504326/504412.

At the end of each level Hiro will encounter a rather nasty end-of-level guardian. Here we see him launching a missile from his reprogrammable Cyber-arm.



"The sacred Fireblade has shattered, and its sixteen parts scattered deep within an underground labyrinth. The people of the Cyberworld need a hero - quickly!"

SWITCHBLADE

GREMLIN (£19.99)

Switchblade is an exceptional platform-game. The game's graphics are well presented and nicely detailed. I especially enjoyed watching Hiro climb the ladders and fall down shafts. The sound is also well implemented with the background tune accompanying the action all the way. The gameplay isn't too difficult, although the overall challenge of finding all the pieces of the Fireblade and killing Havok should keep most gamers busy for quite sometime. All in all, Switchblade is a brilliant little game, one that I wouldn't mind finding in my Christmas stocking.

NC

For ten thousand years the people of the Cyberworld have lived peacefully under the watchful rule of the Bladeknights. However, behind the calm facade of the people lies a terrible fear. For they well remember the Dark Days and the evil Havok who wreaked terror upon them. Banished by the Bladeknights, he has slept, sucking his powers from the nightmares of the weak. He has, once again, grown strong and powerful.

Then, one night, the sky burned red

and the people of the Undercity fell beneath the ferocious onslaught of Havok's nightmare creations. The Bladeknights fearlessly fought alongside their people, but to no avail: both warriors and the innocents died in the battle. Only one of the noble order remained: a young Bladeknight named Hiro. You must assume the role of Hiro and, armed with stealth, cunning and a reprogrammable Cyber-arm, you must enter the Undercity. There your task is to locate and re-assem-



Throughout the labyrinth of tunnels can be found various objects that will enhance Hiro's capabilities. Here our hero has located a weapon that he can use with his Cyber-arm.

STA
Rating
79%

GRAPHICS: 63%
SOUND: 63%

LASTING APPEAL: 79%
ADDICTIVENESS: 82%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 27580

ble the pieces of the Fireblade. Only when the sacred sword is complete will you have the power to destroy Havok and avenge the death of your people.

Essentially, Switchblade is a platform and ladders-style game, with most of the action taking place within the dark corridors of the Undercity. Hiro, the hero of the game, is controlled via the joystick. Two bars at the bottom of the screen represent Hiro's health and his punch power. When our little hero is attacked by one of Havok's minions, the length of the health-bar begins to shorten until it is fully depleted and a life is lost. Players may also control the power of Hiro's punches. A quick tap of the firebutton will cause the Bladeknight to punch with his fist, whilst holding the button down for longer will force either a high kick or a powerful, low-sweeping kick.

Throughout the game, players will be able to collect a number of different items. These range from simple point-gaining jewels, to more useful add-ons such as: speed-ups, missile weapons and power enhancers. The game is divided into five separate sections, each of which is guarded by an end-of-level nasty. Throughout the game you will undoubtedly find pieces of the fabled Fireblade, but only when you have retrieved all sixteen parts can you take on the mighty Havok and avenge your once proud people.

STA

The moment I started playing Switchblade I knew it was going to be good. The programmers, Core Design, have come up with another hit after their previous smash, Rick Dangerous, but this time they have made it better. The graphics are cute, with you taking control of Hiro, a small, well drawn sprite. You could not ask for better audio effects either: a catchy tune plays throughout the game with some good effects complementing the action. There is only one thing I can say about this game, 'Brilliant'.

AS

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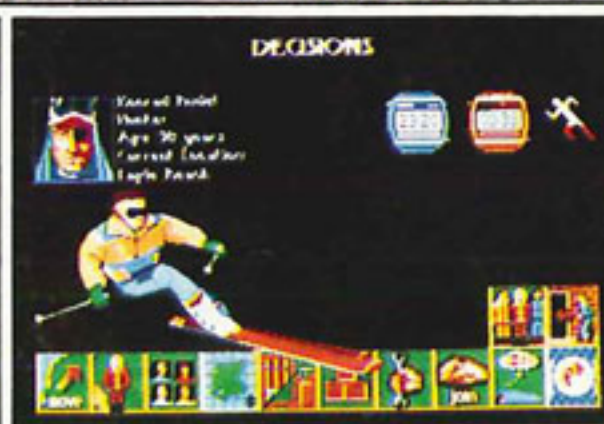
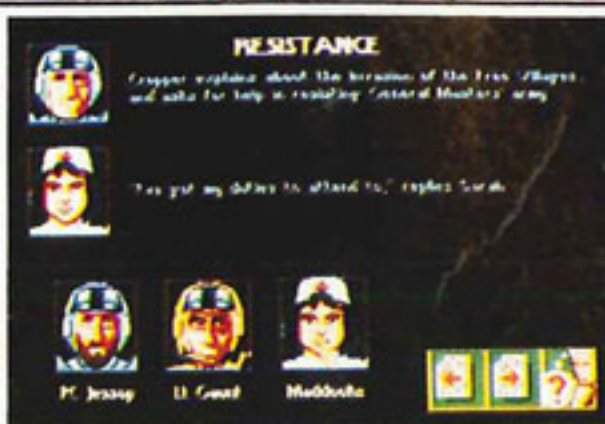
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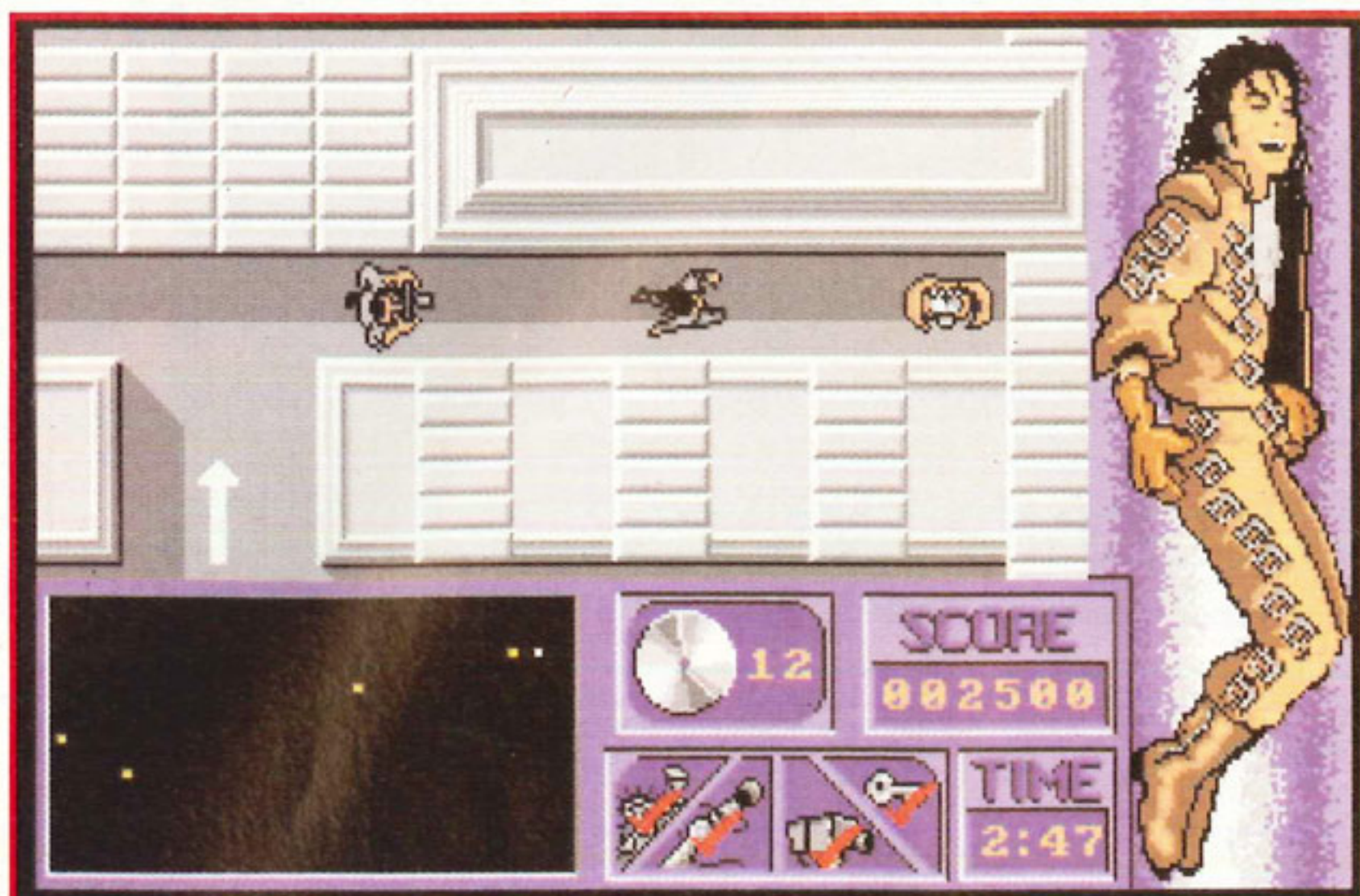


MASTERS OF STRATEGY



MicroProse, Unit 1, Hampton Road Industrial Estate, Tetbury, Glos, GL8 8DA.

There's only the rabbit's head to find. But, with that frenzied fan on your tail, will you survive long enough to reach it?



Aaow! There's no denying that Michael Jackson produces first-class records. However, having seen his film *I'm* somewhat unsure about his acting career. *Moonwalker*, the computer game, adheres very closely to the film's storyline. The game's graphics are well drawn, the animated intermissions being particularly good. I found the game's music rather irritating: sure enough, the tunes sounded like Michael Jackson's records, but the humble ST just couldn't do them justice. As for the gameplay, I found the game a little easy and, ultimately, tedious. All in all, *Moonwalker* is lacking that certain something and failed to impress me.

NC

"Everybody say, 'AAOW!' Having released countless best-selling records, Michael Jackson has ventured into films and now onto our computer screens."

MOONWALKER

US GOLD (£19.99)

The game begins at a film studio; apparently Michael is there to film a video for his latest song. Unfortunately, word about Michael's location has got out, and his frenzied fans are out to track him down. The screen shows a bird's-eye-view street plan. Taking control of Michael you, using a radar-style map, must locate a number of useful objects whilst avoiding contact with your fans. Of course, to escape you'll need a disguise and so you set about your search for various pieces of a rabbit suit. Michael Jackson hates violence and so,

rather than losing a life when you come into contact with a fan, you lose one of several platinum discs. Each of the items must be found within a strict time limit, and failure to retrieve an item in time will again lose you a disc.

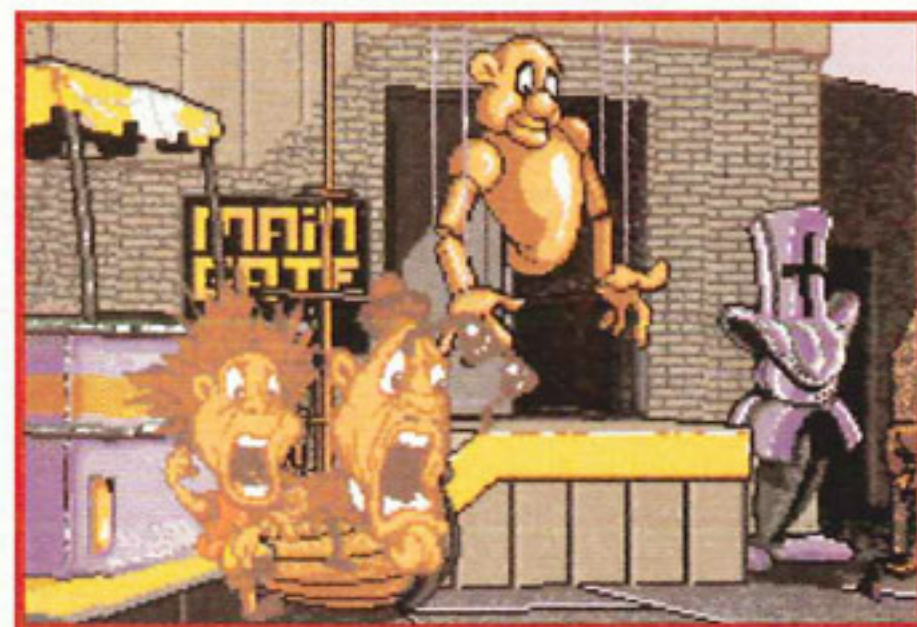
Should you manage to find the rabbit costume, you must attempt to escape on a motorbike. Meanwhile, Mr. Big has seen through your disguise. Tipping off your fans, he attempts to halt your progress by setting up a number of roadblocks. Riding around the city, you must collect a number of orbs that will allow you to transform into a gleaming silver sports car. The transformation only lasts for ten seconds, and in those precious moments you must crash through the barriers. Should you fail to escape you'll lose a disc and begin the level again.

Taking refuge at Club 30 you just have time to regain your breath when Mr. Big's troopers find you. Appearing in doorways and windows, the troopers are armed with

guns and they're out to get you. To help you the children appear and block the hoods' paths. Once again you must guide Michael around Club 30 in an attempt to find a gun and some ammunition. Time, however, is against you for as well as finding items you also have to shoot the deadly assassins before making good your escape.

The final level sees the dastardly Mr. Big up to his usual dirty tricks. In an attempt to lure you into his lair, your arch-enemy has kidnapped your dear friend, Katy. You gingerly enter the evil boss's lair in search of your ill-fated friend. As you do so, you become surrounded by Mr. Big's henchmen. With their guns loaded they carefully take aim. Of course, force must be met with force, and you yourself must carefully take aim and shoot the gun-toting guards. Beware, however, of Mr. Big's plasma cannon - you must destroy this mega-weapon before it destroys you. Can you survive the ambush and rescue Katy? Only time will tell.

STA



He's BAD, Michael Jackson's *Moonwalker* features four completely separate levels.

STA
Rating
51%

GRAPHICS: 49%
SOUND: 50%

LASTING APPEAL: 42%
ADDICTIVENESS: 45%

DIFFICULTY: EASY
1ST DAY SCORE: 103875

'You know I'm bad. I'm bad, you know it....' After seeing the movie I thought that the computer game might be slightly better (I'm not a great Michael Jackson fan if you had not already guessed) - but I'm afraid not. Loading Moonwalker up must have been my first mistake, but a lot more were to come. During the game, a recognizable rendition of "BAD" plays along to complement the action, but after a while I found myself reaching for the volume button. The graphics are not exactly astounding but the animated sequences between levels are fairly well drawn and presented. I'm sorry, but I can only recommend this to avid Wacko Jacko fans.

AS

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Darius+ is another R-Type clone, but not as good. It has a lot of things going for it, like for all of you people that freak over massive weapons, there are some Xenon 2 type lasers, A large Flamer cannon at the front or some plain old shields. The graphics are quite good actually, but I found that, at times, the screen became too cluttered for my liking. Maybe if they made the levels longer and spread the aliens about, it would make the game more enjoyable. The game is still quite good as Shoot 'em-ups go, and deserves a look from anyone who enjoyed R-Type and is looking for another challenge.

AS

Just typical isn't it? You're out on a nice leisurely cruise around the galaxy when you run into some rather unfriendly aliens. While visiting one of the watery planets, you peer through your front viewer, only to catch a glimpse of some of the most feared warriors in the universe. These battle-hardened creatures all share one common bond - the hatred of humanity. There's no point in trying to negotiate with these fellas, oh no! To survive you're going to have to show them what you're made of. So pray you're good enough, or better still, pray you die quickly!

Generally speaking, coin-op shoot'em-ups all look the same all, that is, except Darius. Taito's supreme blaster wowed arcade audiences everywhere because of its revolutionary three-screen display. Have The Edge tried to emulate this unique design? Well, no, but what they have done is liaised with the game's original manufacturers in order to bring you Darius+.

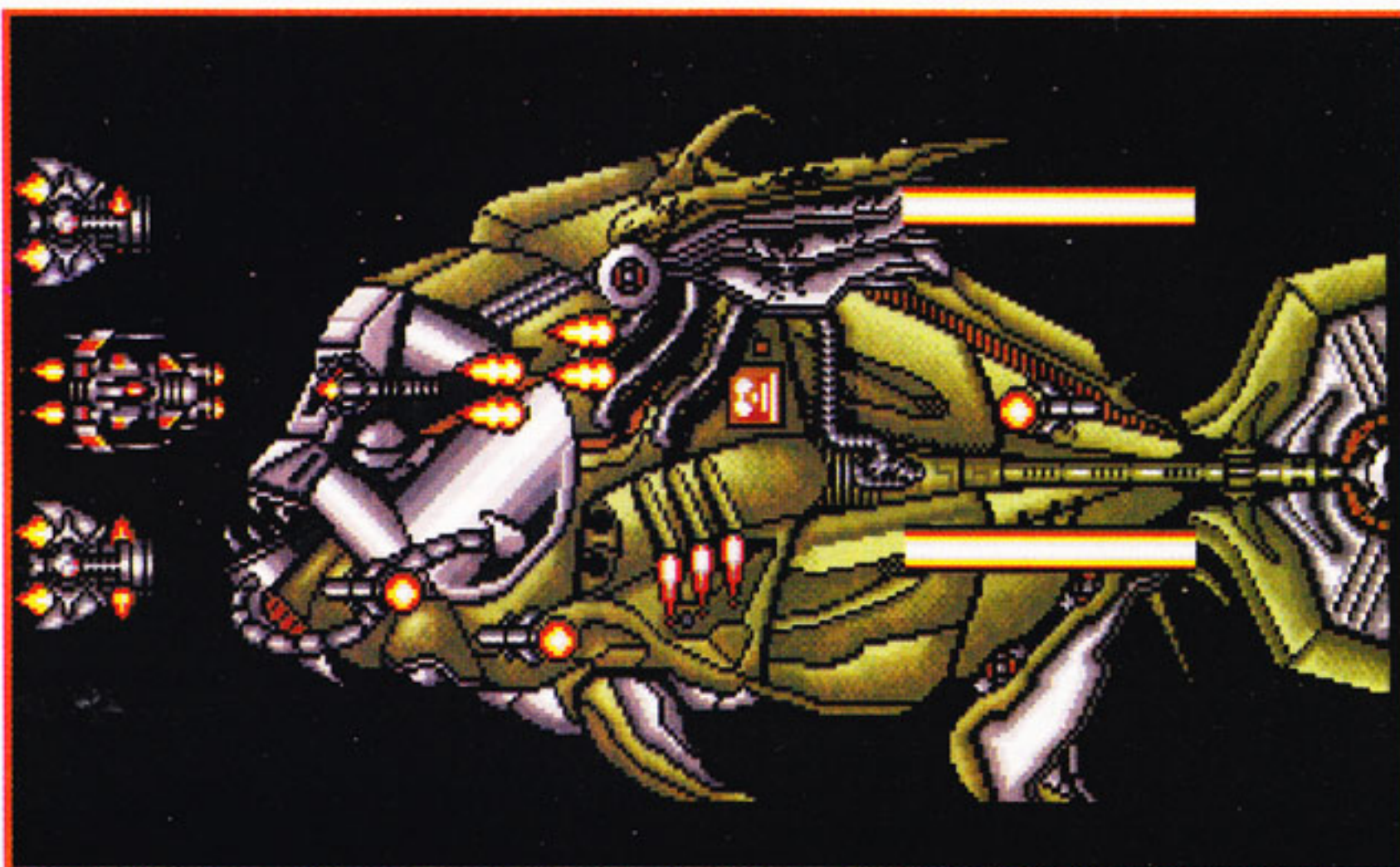
Unlike the original game, the action takes place only on the one screen. As the game begins, your humble craft appears from the left of the screen, while an onslaught of alien ships swarm from the right. To begin with, your craft has what amounts to a pea-shooter for a cannon, and picking off the hateful enemy

"You are approaching a huge battleship - Fatty Glutton... No, it's not a food-fight clone. Darius+ is the latest alien-zapping blaster from the Edge."

DARIUS+

THE EDGE (£19.95)

Armed to the teeth, you come face to face with the enemy battleship. In order to destroy him you must shoot away various key parts.

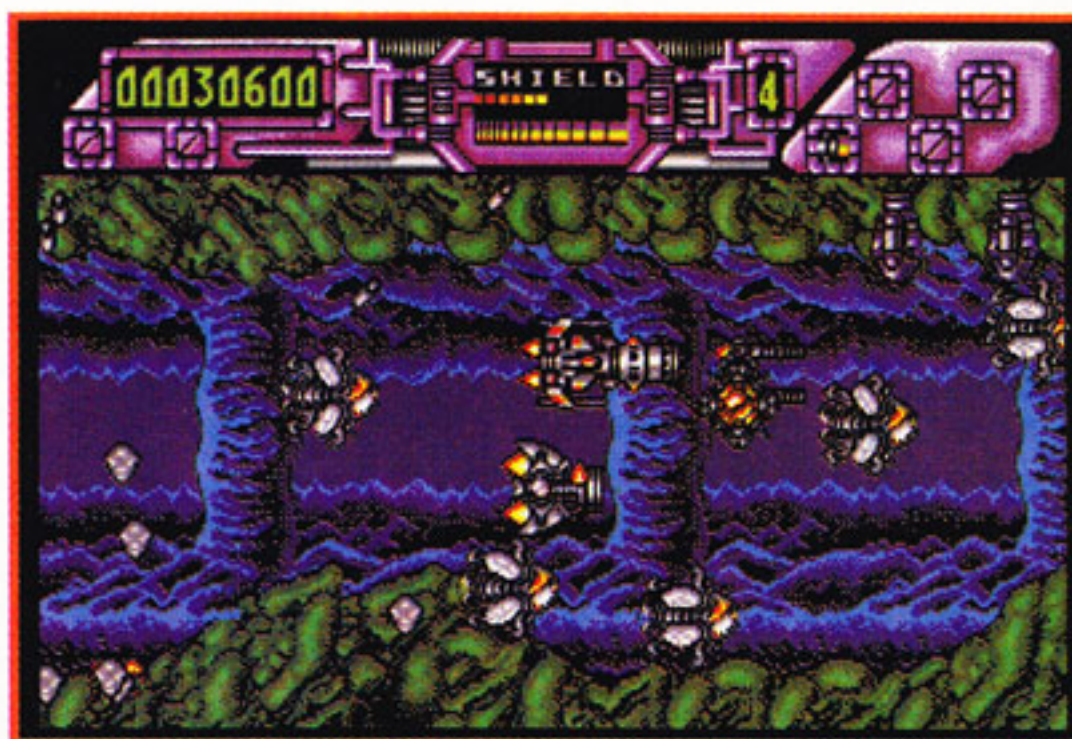


becomes a real task. However, as with all good shoot'em-ups, you have the opportunity to add extra firepower to your ship. Every so often a token appears amidst the army of aliens. Taking care not to destroy it, you must run into the token in order to collect it. There are two different types of tokens to collect. The most common sports an orange centre; collecting this will cause your ship's firepower to progress to the next, more powerful, level. The other type of token pulses red and collecting this either produces a protective shield around your ship or allows you to add a further weapons centre to your craft.

By collecting and carefully distributing the various power-ups, you can transform your ship into a formidable opponent.

As you reach the end of each level you will be warned of a huge battleship approaching. Destroying these ships certainly isn't easy, as they require several well-aimed hits. Still, should you manage to send the end-of-level monster crashing to its doom you will be asked to select another sector before the battle starts afresh.

STA



Whilst playing Darius+ the screen can become quite cluttered, ultimately resulting in the loss of your life.

Darius was a real blast in the arcades and I was really looking forward to this enhanced version. However, fans - be warned: if you are looking for a close conversion, this isn't it. That's not to say that Darius+ isn't a good game, it is. What the programmers have done is to have compromised the three-screen aspect and added extra weapons instead. The graphics are very well presented and the sound good, too. However, I found that the screen became rather cluttered during the game's more intense moments. Without doubt, Darius+ is a good little shoot'em-up, but I can't help feeling that it's not a patch on the original.

NC

**STA
Rating
62%**

**GRAPHICS: 47%
SOUND: 60%**

**LASTING APPEAL: 60%
ADDICTIVENESS: 63%**

**DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 52000**

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CHINOS

Well, what can I say? From the moment this game entered the office we've all been battling over who will play it. North and South is one of the finest games I have played for quite sometime. Graphically, the game features exceptional cartoon-style effects, with some hilarious touches for good measure. The game's sound has also been highly polished, the in-game music consisting of tunes from that era, while the effects are both clear and original. As for the gameplay, the action is maddeningly addictive - battles being my favourite episodes. Although easy to play, the game offers a number of different levels, thus allowing all ST owners to enjoy this excellent game. Brilliant!

NC

With graphics and animation of cartoon quality, Infogrames stunned the world with Stir Crazy. Eighteen months on and they release the latest in the Spirou Collection of comic books, Les Tuniques Bleues, or North and South. Set in the American civil war, Infogrames have recreated the hilarious characterization of this immensely popular comic book, and so the game is more hysterical than historical. The loading screen shows a bugler on his horse in the mist, tooting to a piece of digitized music. Next is an option screen which is guaranteed to make you laugh as you click on the Stars and Stripes or the rebel flag to command the Yankees or the Rebels. Then, whether you're playing against a computer-controlled opponent or a human commander, you can set the skill level of each army which is represented by rank. So you can set equal sides or pit the skill of a general against a bungling, dopey hillbilly squad. You can also choose intervention from Cherokee and Mexican attacks, suffer the effects of bad weather and even choose strategic or arcade play. Finally, a photographer takes a picture of your options for posterity and, in a blinding flash of magnesium, you set your mind to the battle.

A strategic map appears showing troop displacements, army strongholds and Indian and Mexican camps. Additionally, you can see shipping move-

'Zut alors - attention, a vos sabres et CHARGEZ VOUS!!! At lastez vous, the much-awaited tres hilarious comic from Les Spirou collection, Les Tuniques Bleues, or North and South to you and me - regardez!'

NORTH & SOUTH

STAL

■ INFOGRAMES (£19.95) ■

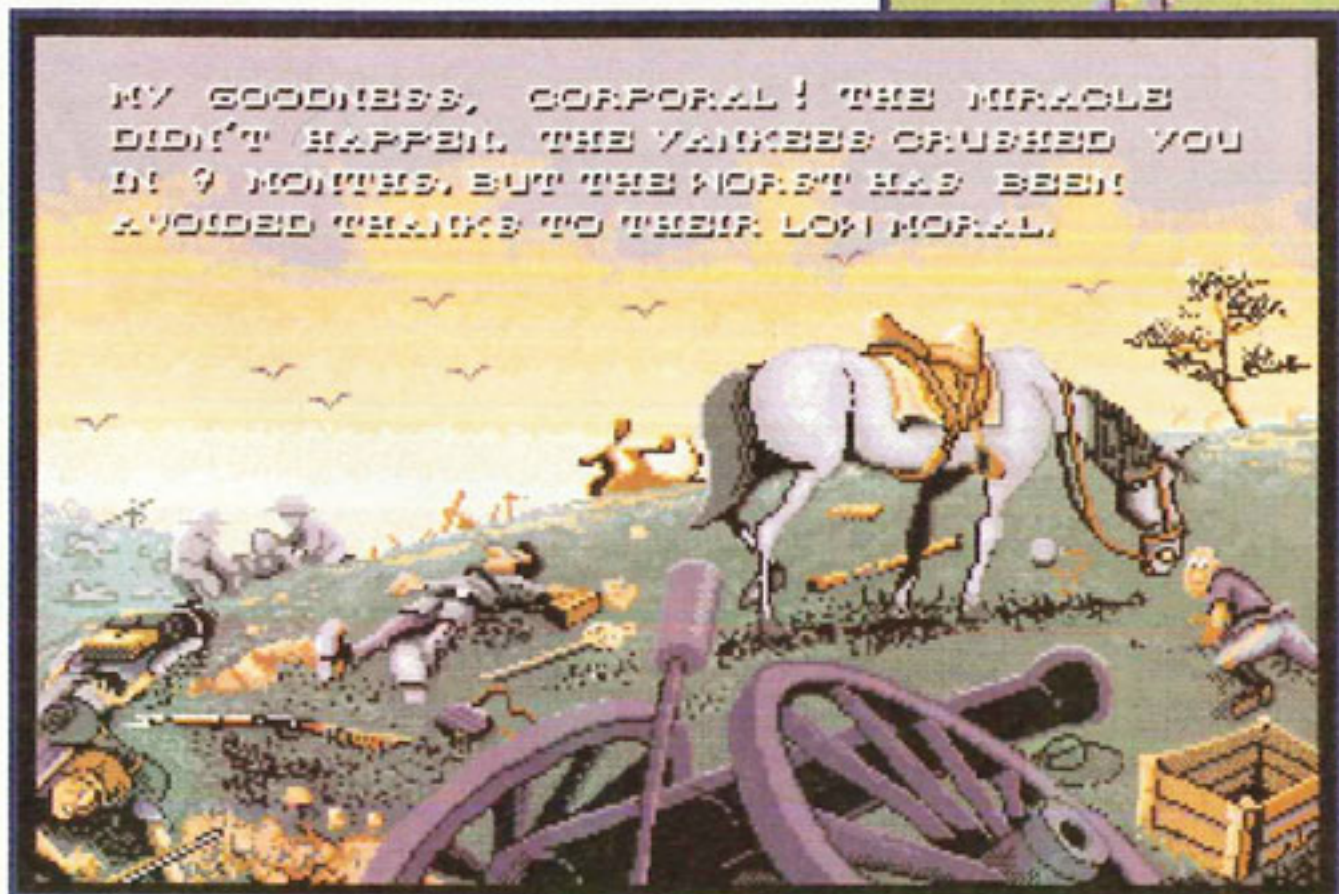
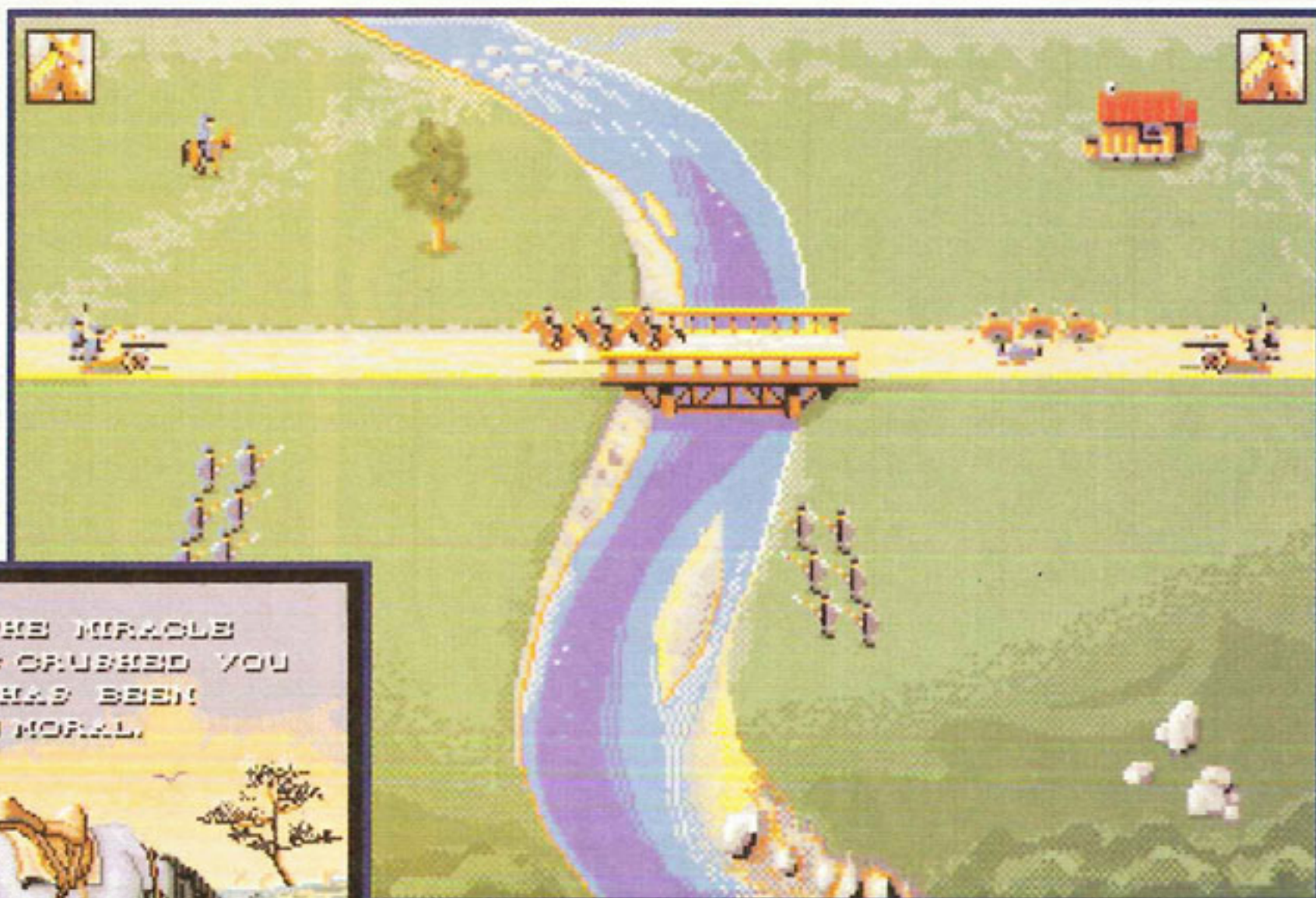
Highly original gameplay, hilarious animation, brilliant characterization, stunning, digitized music and sound effects, all conspire to make this the most enjoyable hybrid game I have ever played on the ST. The quality in all areas of presentation is astounding - the best ever even, and the gameplay is hysterically funny and yet, at the same time, very challenging. Sometimes, I say a particular game will appeal to certain people, but I can guarantee that everyone, yes everyone, will enjoy North and South. It deserves to zoom to the top of every known chart and stay there until somebody can equal its quality. Congratulations to Infogrames who have been trying to present us with original games for two years or more and now. Finally, it's paid off - THIS IS WHAT WE WANT!

JS

ments at the main port and a train which chuffs up and down the main track. With joystick or mouse, you can click on your army which highlights where you can move to, and you can even group a number of armies together for a battle. The overall aim is to fight and defeat a resident army and take territory, position a section of your army near the railroad in order to control the line and guard the port - if that means a battle then so be it.

Fusing two armies, a rebel unit moves towards a Yankee emplacement and an inset screen appears showing your army charging towards the enemy. A cannonball zooms into their ranks and action moves to the battle-ground which could be in desert terrain and canyons or around farm buildings.

The armies take position and a small icon at the top of the screen shows which section of your army you're in control of -



▲ This strategic map shows army positions and strongholds, Indian and Mexican camps and railroad and shipping movements. Here, a Yankee section is unable to move due to a thunderstorm. The objective is to gain control of the railroad and port and occupy forts.

◀ You infiltrate a fort and, once inside, fight, kick and punch every troop along the perimeter, avoiding dynamite boxes. The old boot at the base of the screen must reach the end before the timepiece.

STA
Rating
93%

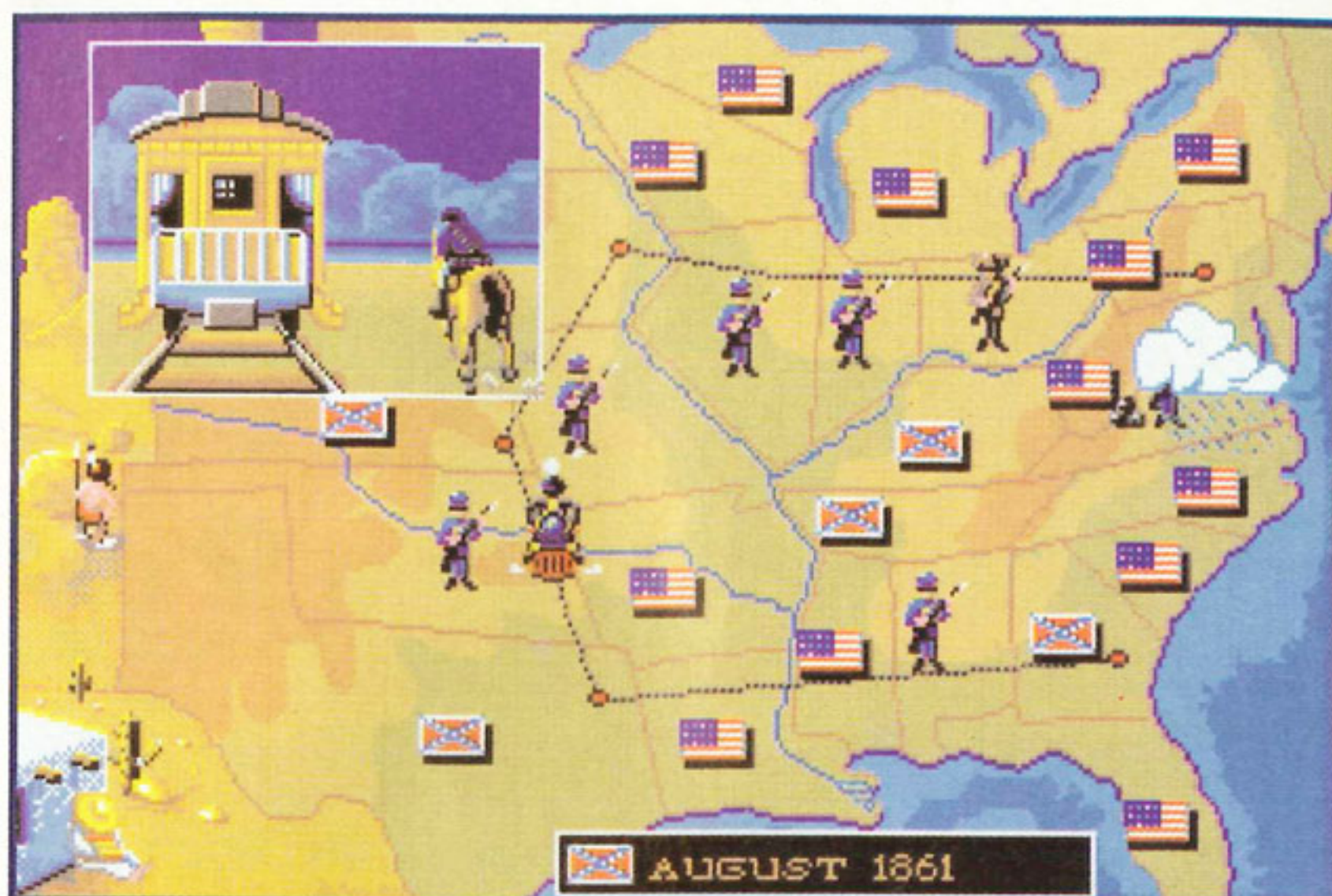
GRAPHICS: 90%
SOUND: 98%

LASTING APPEAL: 91%
ADDICTIVENESS: 91%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

for example: cannon balls represent the cannons, a horse indicates cavalry and a rifle means infantry; tapping the SHIFT key changes control. The Yankee cavalry gallops for the bridge which spans a river. Quickly you must position the cannon, press fire to set the power of the shot, and release to fire. The ball smashes the bridge to splinters and the cavalry fall into the river with a distressed 'whinnee' from the horses. Next you move the infantry to the river, aim and fire at the retreating Yankees. You manage to position a section by the railroad and, as the train chuffs past, one of your riders gallops alongside. With quick joystick waggling,

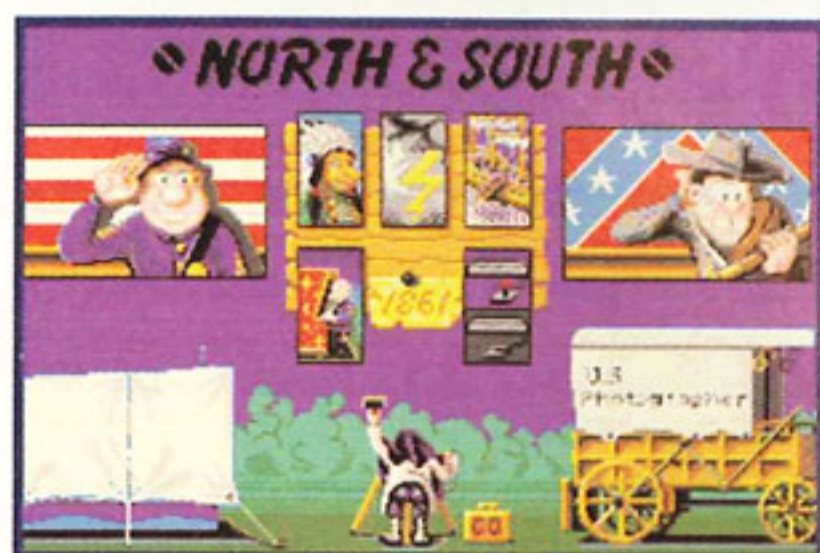
Inevitably a Yankee and rebel army meet and a battle ensues. Neighbour fights neighbour, kinfolk fight kinfolk. You can change control from cavalry to cannon to infantry. Here, the yankee cavalry head for the bridge. Quickly you position the cannons to blow it up.



he grabs hold of the last coach and the screen changes to show the side of the train with your brave troop atop the carriages. Aroused by boots clumping along the roof, the Yankee troops climb up on the top of the train and an hilarious bout of fisticuffs and knife-throwing ensues. You must eliminate all the troops on board the train in order to reach the gold - with gold in the bank you can buy more troops and weaponry.

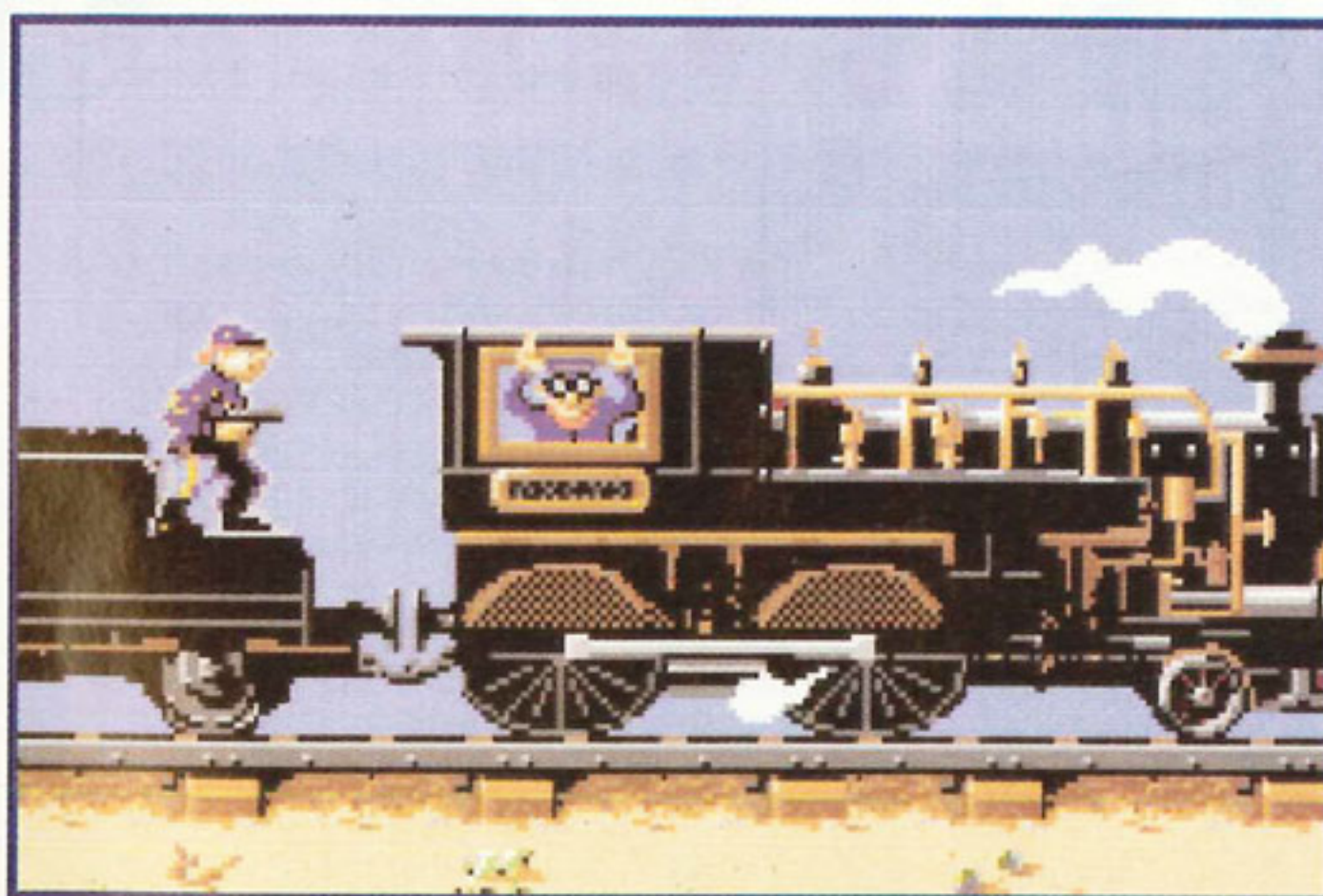
Another battle takes place, and with your stronger, better-equipped army, you leave the Yankees strewn across the ter-

rain. Taking control of a major fortification you single-handedly run along the perimeter of the fort, avoiding dynamite and Yankee thugs. At the base of the screen is an alarm clock which represents the time and an old boot indicates the progress of your brave troop. The boot must reach the other side of the screen before the clock. The rebels have control of the port, the railroad and forts and, miraculously, you've rewritten American history - I wonder who'd be president today if this happened - Daisy Duke perhaps? **STA**



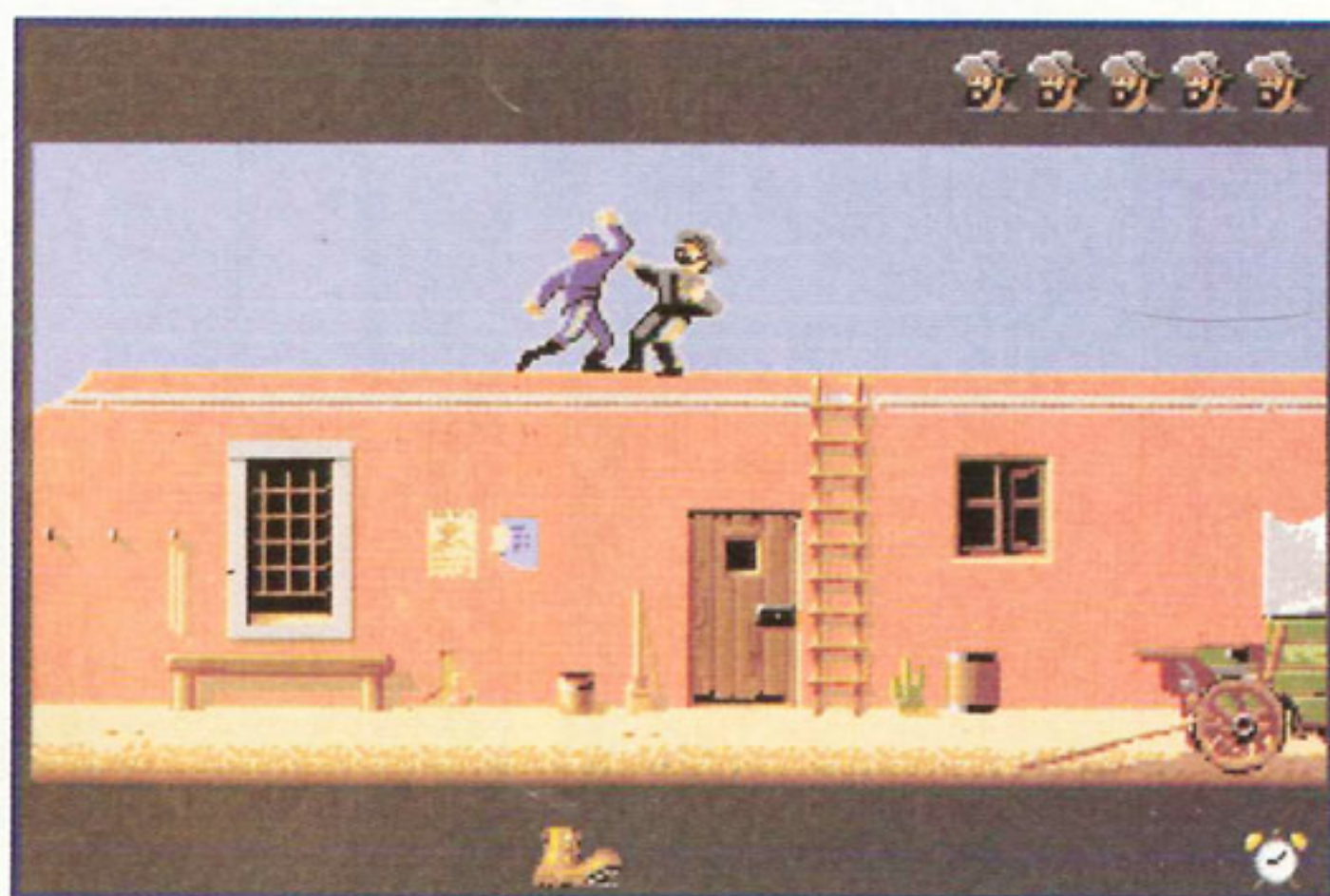
Sacre bleu! What a brilliant game. It is one of the best I have played in ages, and when in two-player mode it is the best game since Speedball. The graphics are based on a French cartoon, and what an amazing job they have made of them. They are smoothly animated and well drawn and they really made me laugh when they didn't complete the fort stage and collapsed to the ground in a tantrum. The sound is equally good, with some decent tunes and sound effects complementing the action. I wouldn't have thought that a game about the American Civil War could have been this good, but Infogrames have proved me wrong by producing this brilliant game. Go and buy it now, or spend the rest of your life not knowing what you've missed.

AS



With gold in the Wells Fargo bank, you buy more troops and station a section by the railroad. A brave troop gallops alongside the train and, with furious joystick waggling, jumps aboard.

Aroused by clumping boots on the carriage roof, Yankees spill out of the train and a crazy bout of fisticuffs and knife-throwing ensues.





STA Rating 75%
GRAPHICS: 81% SOUND: 67%
LASTING APPEAL: 71% ADDICTIVENESS: 72%
DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE 1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

"Roll up, roll up! See the stupendous Big Top 'o' Fun - before it's closed down for good. The tarpaulin may be torn; Finola the trapeze artist may have seen better days; the clowns are about as funny as a bad case of piles; but we're desperate for money!"

FIENDISH FREDDIE'S BIG TOP 'O FUN

— MINDSCAPE (£29.95) —

Times are hard for the family circus, and the day of reckoning has arrived. A limo, so big you could land a light aircraft on the bonnet, pulls up at the Big Top and a representative of 'The Big Bank' hands an ultimatum to the hapless ringmaster. The letter states that you owe 'the stone-deaf bank' \$10,000 smackeroos, and you've

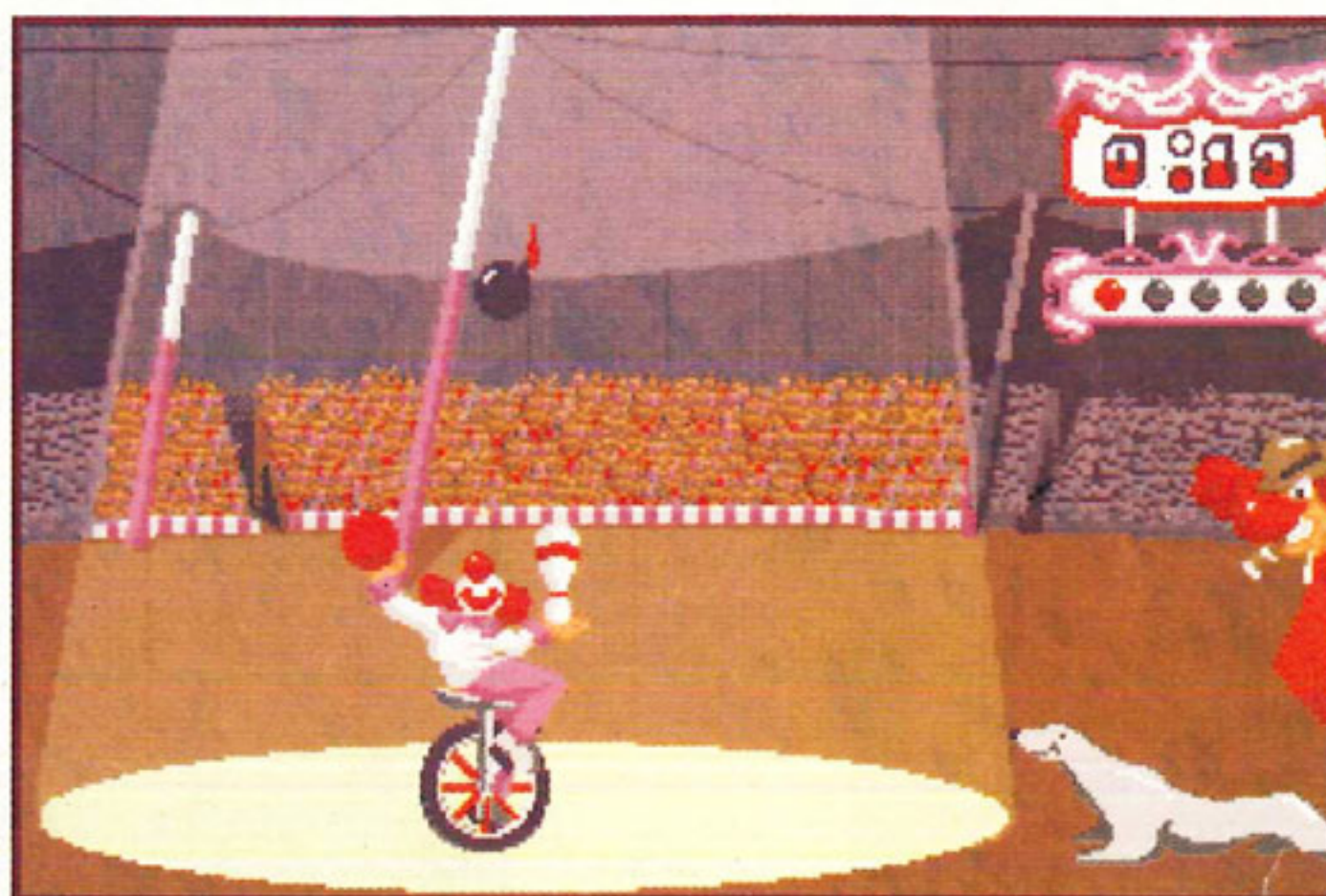
In Fiendish Freddy, Mindscape present us with what they do best: a thrilling spectacle with hilarious characterization and cartoon-quality animation. 'Freddy' is a graphical delight, and the sacrifice for this visual pleasure is a constant five disk shuffle which tends to affect the continuity of gameplay. Nevertheless, this is a professional and highly-polished production with the best circus gameplay to date. This is a change of game-style for the graphically-conscious team, and their drawing and animation prowess is unequivocal. However, the stilted gameplay makes Freddy a highly enjoyable, but short-term-interest game - a graphical delight from the purveyors of perfection!

JS

got till tomorrow morning to come up with the readies. The future of the circus relies on tonight's performance - is the curtain finally going to come down on the 'Big Top 'o' Fun'? Meanwhile, to ensure the demise of the circus, the caring bank has employed the services of an evil and bitter clown to infiltrate the troop and sabotage the show. A little red matchbox-size car pulls up and a full-size clown unfolds and sprints off - now to 'the magnificent menu'! Up to six players can participate, and although the objective is to raise \$10,000, you are also trying to make

more than your opponents. Next, each player chooses circus animal characters to represent them so that you know whose turn it is.

'Ladies and gents, avert your gaze to the very precipice of the Big Top for phenomenal feats of diving daring - I think yaw!' Horace, the high-diver, scales the horrendous heights and perches precariously on the diving platform. To the right of the screen is a scale model of the dive to aid your descent to the pitifully small barrel. A tap of the firebutton and Horace spreads his arms revealing a chest the



Jeffy Joe, a genuine juggling genius, limbers up on the unicycle while his salty assistant launches a few balls and skittles into the air. Suddenly, the fiendish-one lobs in a bomb and the bungling fool catches it - bye-bye, juggling genius.

Thank heavens for hard disks! Unlike my colleagues I installed Fiendish Freddy onto my hard drive and, therefore, managed to by-pass all the annoying disk swaps. Graphically, the game is excellent. The use of colour and the character animation is exceptional - almost cartoon-like. The sound effects are also good, but it's the theme-tune that gets me - I just couldn't stop humming it! As for the gameplay, Fiendish Freddy offers six action-packed events, all of which are fun to play. Personally, when running the game from a floppy-drive, I found that the excessive disk-swapping a touch distracting. All in all, Fiendish Freddy is an excellent multi-event-style game that is best enjoyed by dual or hard disk users.

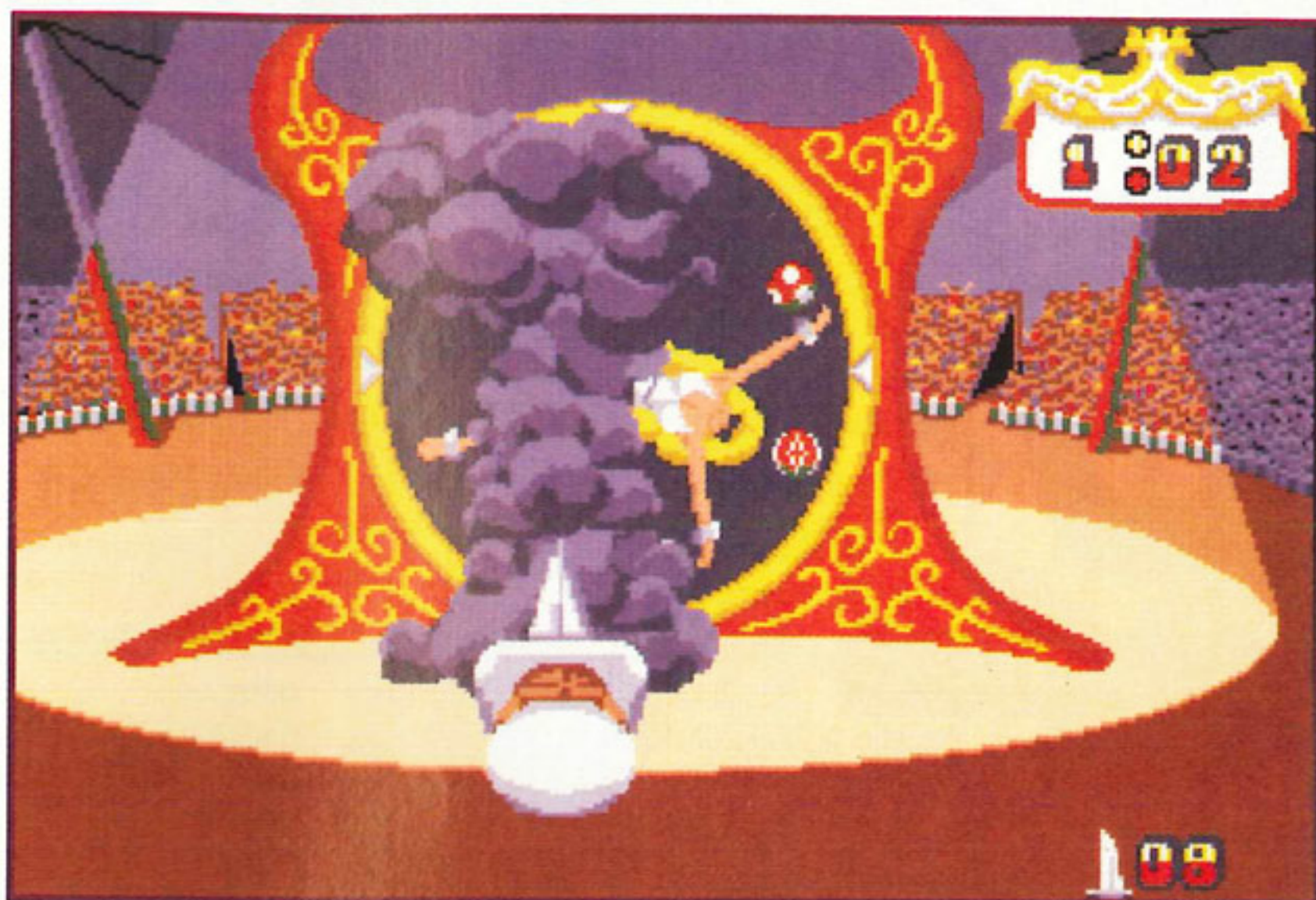
NC

width of a Chesterfield sofa, jumps and plummets. Moving the joystick from side to side sends Horace spinning, and when you've gained enough momentum you can try a pose such as, King Tut, ballet dancer or yoga position. Suddenly, Fiendish Freddy flies on screen with a jet-pack which blows Horace off course and you must struggle to get him back in line with the barrel. SMASH!! Horace gets a mouthful of sawdust and elephant jobbies and the crazy panel of judges award a pittance of prize money.

In desperation, the ringmaster introduces Jeffy-Joe - 'a genuine juggling genius'! Jeffy-Joe mounts his unicycle and while his faithful sealion assistant hurls balls and skittles into the air, you manoeuvre the unicycle to catch the projectiles. But just when things start to go well, Fiendish Freddy lobbs in a bomb, BOOM!! - bye-bye, juggling genius! Next, Finola from the Flying Fuller Family grasps the trapeze for a death-defying act of stupidity. A tap of the firebutton and Finola swings across the arena. Then, moving the joystick in the direction she is swinging, lengthens the arc, inching towards another trapeze. Now, without the aid of a safety net, you must judge when to make the jump - gulp! Next, she attempts the dive through a flaming hoop - but Freddy is always around to dampen your ardour.

With your lovely but brainless assistant, Knancy Knife, blindfolded and tied to the spinning wheel of death, you attempt the deadly and dangerous daggers of

Once again, Knancy is tied to the wheel of death and your aim must be true, your timing precise as you attempt to burst the balloons and avoid deflating Knancy's assets. Oh oh! Freddy lobbs in a smoke-bomb to obscure your view.



death. Your aim (pardon the pun), is to burst the balloons without deflating Knancy's assets - timing is of paramount importance. Meanwhile, devious Freddy appears and throws a smoke bomb to obscure your view - for a clown he's a real party pooper! Things get really desperate as the ringmaster sends the vertiginous Tony Tiptoe up to the dizzy heights. Pushing forward on the joystick sends timid Tony trembling along the tightrope. He leans to the left, you adjust his balance with the joystick; but as he regains his equilibrium the balancing pole turns red and you have a second to correct his balance. Freddy digs deep into his pocket of tricks here! If you take too long to cross

the wire, he wheels out his cannon and fires up at you or hurls circular-saw blades - you've got to give him his due, he's a determined little blighter.

Finally, for a fantastic, fiery finale, we present Ferdinand the human cannonball in a combustible, colossal cock-up. As Ferdinand climbs into the barrel, you asses the amount of gunpowder needed, and his assistant lights the touch paper. Then, using a scale plan of the arena, you guide our fearless hero well wide of the safety net - SPLAT! The judges are appalled and they award a pittance for the spectacle. It looks like no more Big top 'o' Fun - perhaps it's just as well!

STA



Vertiginous Tony Tiptoe steps out on the wire - he leans to the left; you push to the right - he totters to the right and - whoop Tiptoe slips and Freddy kindly helps him to the ground.

Fiendish Freddy's Big Top 'O Fun is the sort of game you don't see very often. There is a lot of potential for a game about circus acts, and Fiendish Freddy seems to have brought out this potential, with some hilarious additions as well. The graphics are very well drawn, in true cartoon-style. They strut around the monitor as if they were alive, which is something you don't see very often. There are different tunes as well, all of them being good and catchy, I even found myself whistling along to the main tune. There is one major set back though, and that is the amount of disk swapping you have to do between each event. For this reason, Fiendish Freddy is only a good game instead of a brilliant game.

AS



Combustible cannons of colossal courage, Fernando's shot into the air where he lands...? In a fresh layed pile of elephant business.

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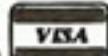
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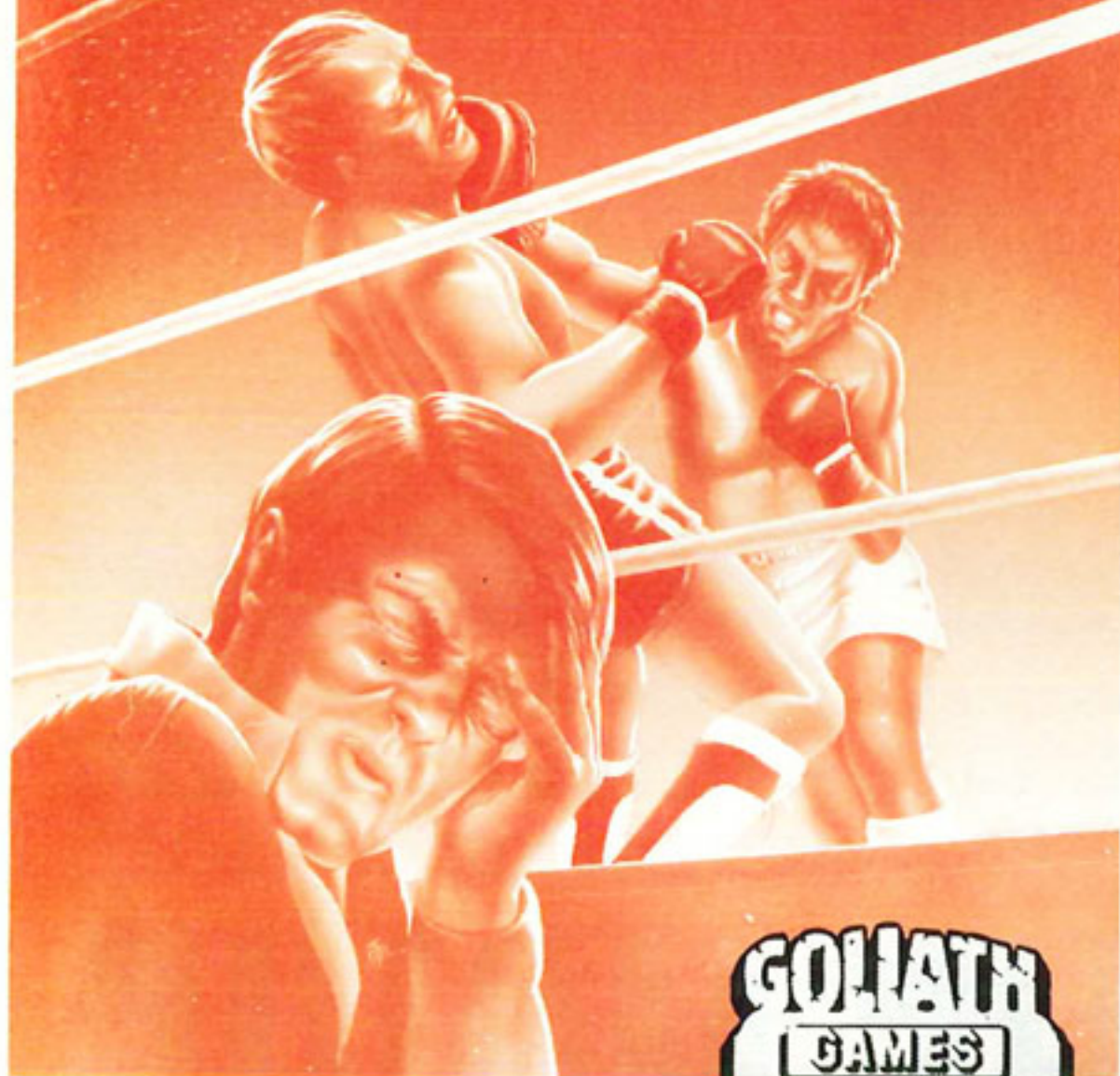
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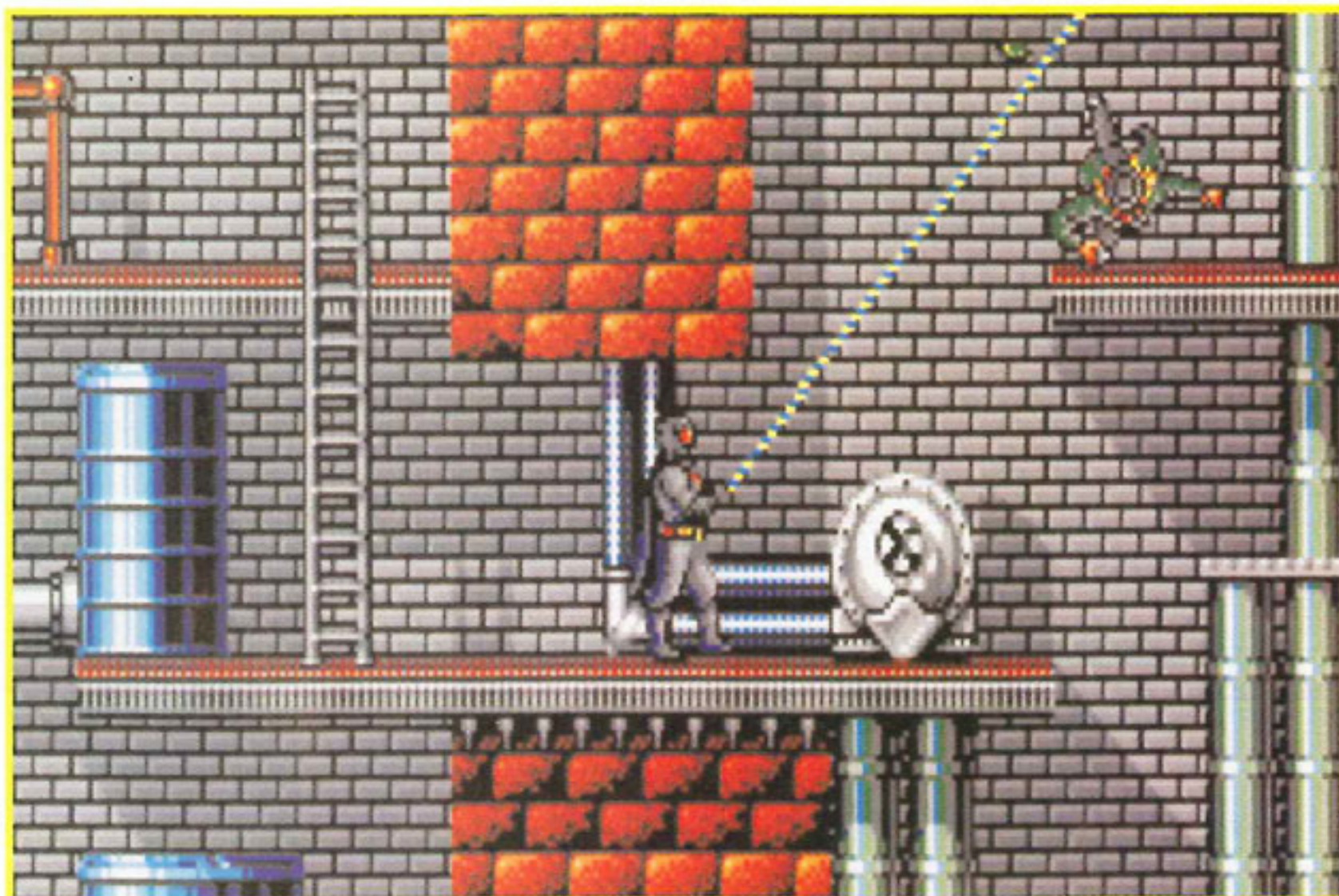
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Being a great fan of the film, I thought the game of the movie was great. Taking on the role of the comic book hero was great, especially on the Batmobile level. Graphically, the game is very good, the sprites being well drawn and animated. The sound is not as good as Prince's album but you can't expect any ST to reproduce the great sounds of the film. Not only does the game look good, it plays well too, and the different types of level test your skill to the maximum. In a 'Bat-shell', I would definitely recommend the game to anyone, even if they haven't seen the film.

AS

In first level set the Dark Knight out to capture Jack Napier. The criminal loses his footing and slips into a vat of toxic waste. Jack is dead, only the Joker lives.



"By now virtually every-one must have seen

Batman - The Movie. But now, the silver-screen hero ventures onto your monitor, thanks to Ocean. The question is, can you take on the might of the Joker's underworld gang and save the innocent citizens of Gotham?"

BATMAN - THE MOVIE

OCEAN (£19.99)

It's midnight, you're standing on the top of a building dressed as a six-foot-tall bat. Down below you can see the hustle and bustle of city life. You walk over to the edge of a building and look down a back street. In the darkness a crime is being committed. Two men are attacking a married couple and their defenseless son. After stealing the victims' valuables they disappear. You hide amongst the shadows as the crooks brush past you. They sit down and start handing out the money.

With ease, you glide down silently behind them. As you land on the gravel they both swing around to look at you. One of them squeals, "What are you?". "I'm Batman...", you reply.

The computer game starts in the Axis chemical factory. You have to direct the super hero around the screen using the joystick. Whilst manoeuvring along the maze-like factory, you'll encounter an assortment of criminals; some brandishing guns, others lobbing hand-grenades.

After disposing of the gangsters, you have to use your Bat-rope to swing over gaps and the like. You'll also have to avoid pipes that spurt lethal chemicals - contact with these substances rapidly reduces you health. Finally, you'll have to confront Jack Napier. One, well-placed shot should make him lose his footing and he'll plunge into a vat of toxic chemicals. From now on, Jack is dead - the Joker lives on.

After defeating Napier, you must jump into the Batmobile and make good your escape. As you tear off down the busy



Racing around busy streets in a souped-up motor car is my idea of fun. Sit in the Batmobile in an attempt to outrun the police.

Well, at long last he's here, the caped crusader has arrived. The game's action follows the plot of the film very closely and, unlike certain other film tie-ins I could mention, Ocean have managed to incorporate that all-important ingredient, gameplay. The graphics are well drawn, although I did think that our hero had put on a little weight. The in-game music complements the action nicely. The varied stages make the game worth playing, although I feel that some of the sections were perhaps a little too long. Batman will undoubtedly sell like hot cakes and I, for one, don't think there'll be very many disappointed fans.

NC

It must have been tempting for Ocean to release the sixteen-bit versions of this game during Batmania. But they held on until the game was as good as it could be, and they should be commended for that. This has got to rate as one of the best movie license games ever! The general presentation is very professional and there's a variety of game-styles which makes great use of those: 'wonderful toys' - in particular, I love the Batarang action. The Gotham city, night-time street scenes are very atmospheric, and the platform levels offer platform action at its best. My only criticism is that in general, the game-play is rather easy to complete. All-to-often, license games rely on the name, but that just isn't the case with Batman.

JS

streets of Gotham you have to go as fast as possible. Trying to avoid all of the other cars is hard enough, but you also have to turn corners at breakneck speed. This is done by firing a grappling hook to catch onto a nearby lamp post and letting the rope throw you around. You only have three chances in total and, if you miss, you run into a police road block.

Next it's back to the Bat-cave, where you have to try to fathom out what the Joker is infecting with the lethal toxin, Smilex. From a selected range you have to pick three different products. If you manage to guess the correct combination of items you can hand the Smilex formula over to the police, thus stopping the arch criminal in his tracks. By the simple method of elimination you should eventually get the right combination.

Climbing into the cockpit of your revolutionary fighter-aircraft, the Batwing, you prepare for the next stage. This level is reminiscent of the second, the only exception is that you are flying instead of driving. Your task is to cut the mooring ropes that hold massive Smilex-filled balloons. You have to dispense of one hundred,

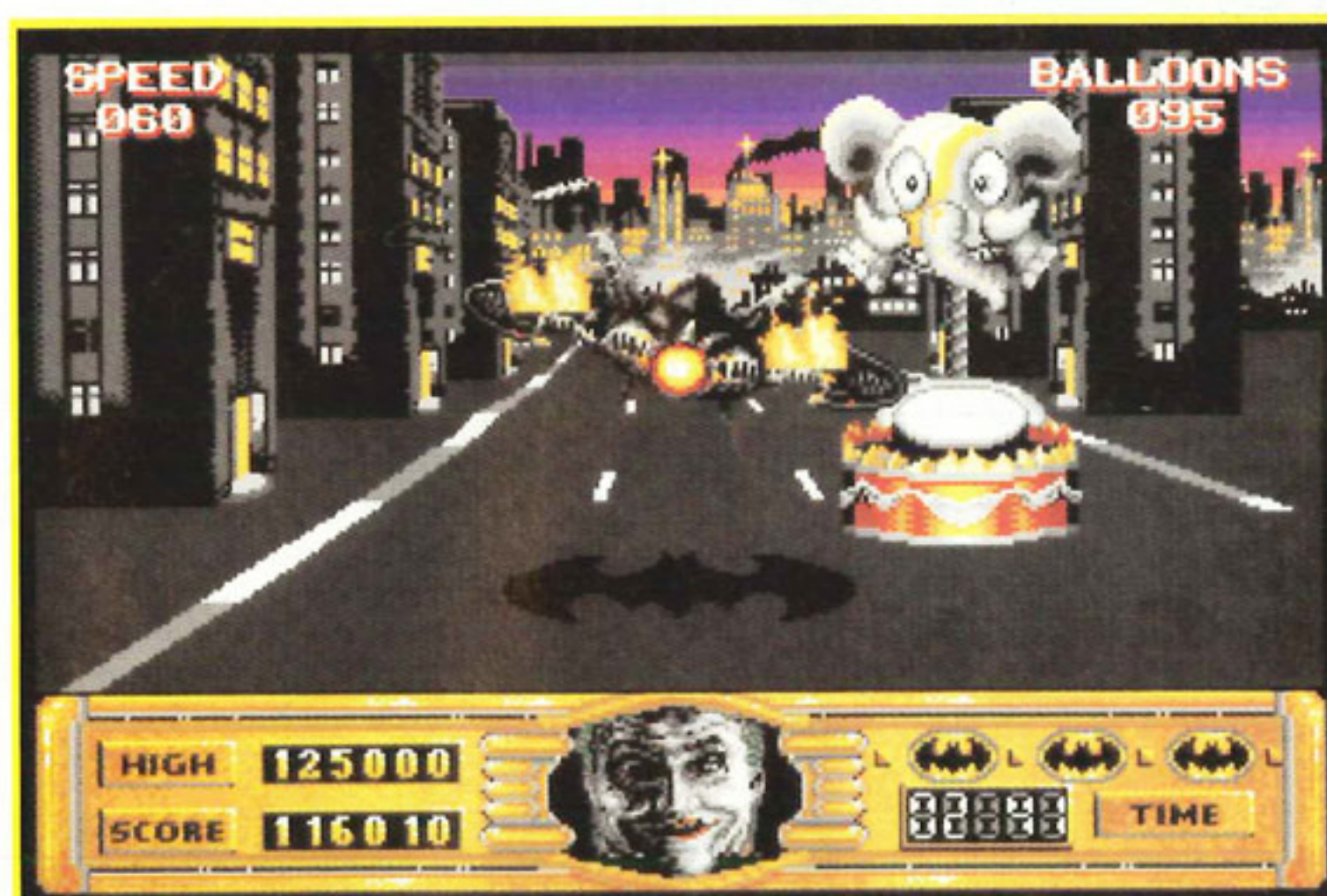
Remember the board game of mastermind? This level makes you pit your wits against the Joker's fiendish plan to poison the people of Gotham city.



brightly coloured balloons. This is done by flying through the ropes in order to cut them, thus letting the balloon float harmlessly into the atmosphere. However, if you miss a balloon or fly into it, you cause it to burst and drop its load of Smilex gas onto the unsuspecting citizens.

The cathedral is crawling with the Joker's henchmen who you have to dispose of or avoid. This time some of the platforms crumble underfoot and rats try

and gnaw away at your energy. Defeating the maze of the cathedral finally puts you face to face with your arch enemy, the Joker. If you lose, the Joker will bring the whole of Gotham to its feet, but becoming the victor makes you the hero everyone's talking about. **STA**



Jump into the cockpit of the high-tech Batwing and cut the mooring ropes of each balloon, sending the fatal smilex up into the atmosphere.

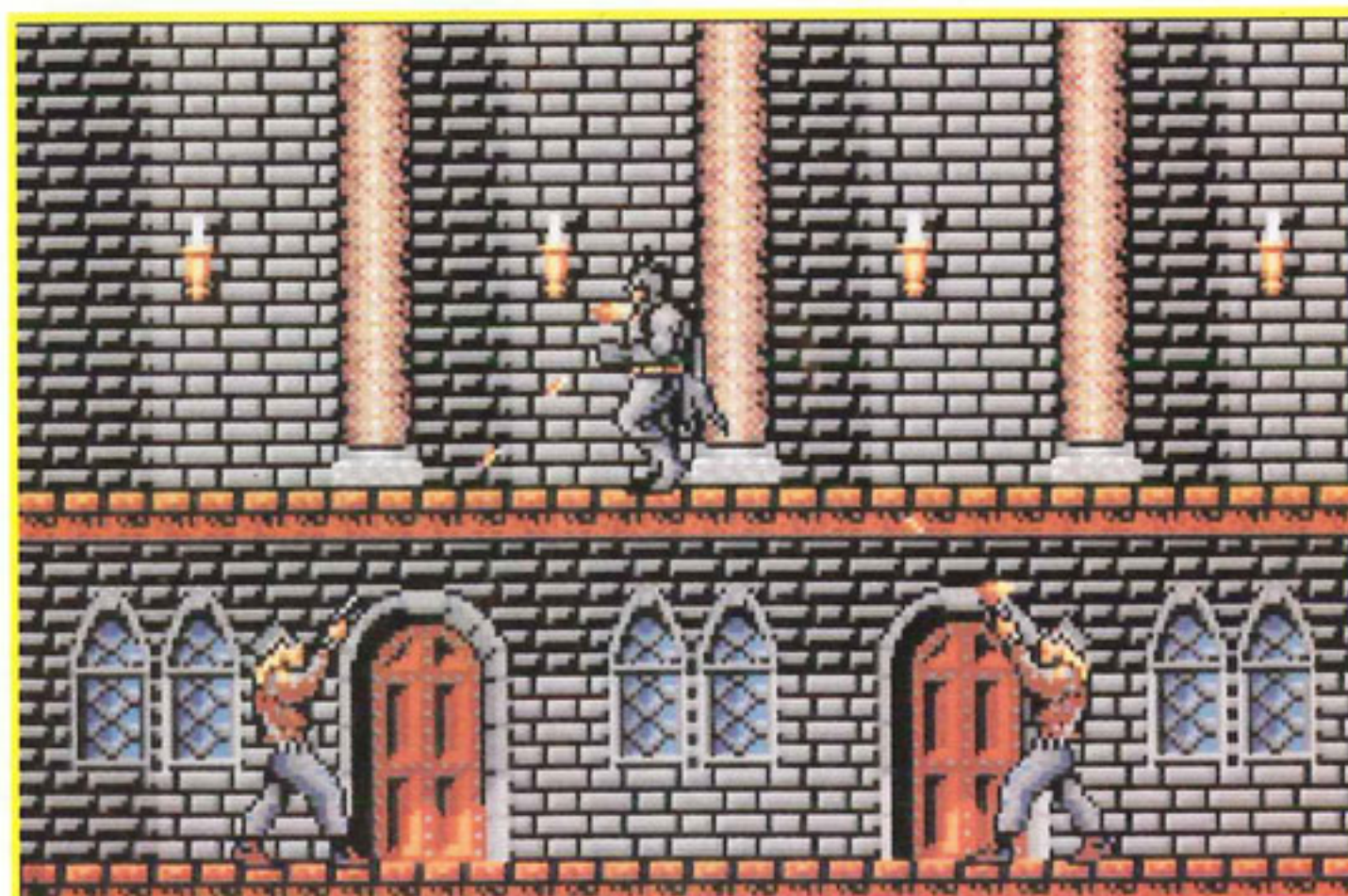
STA
Rating
74%

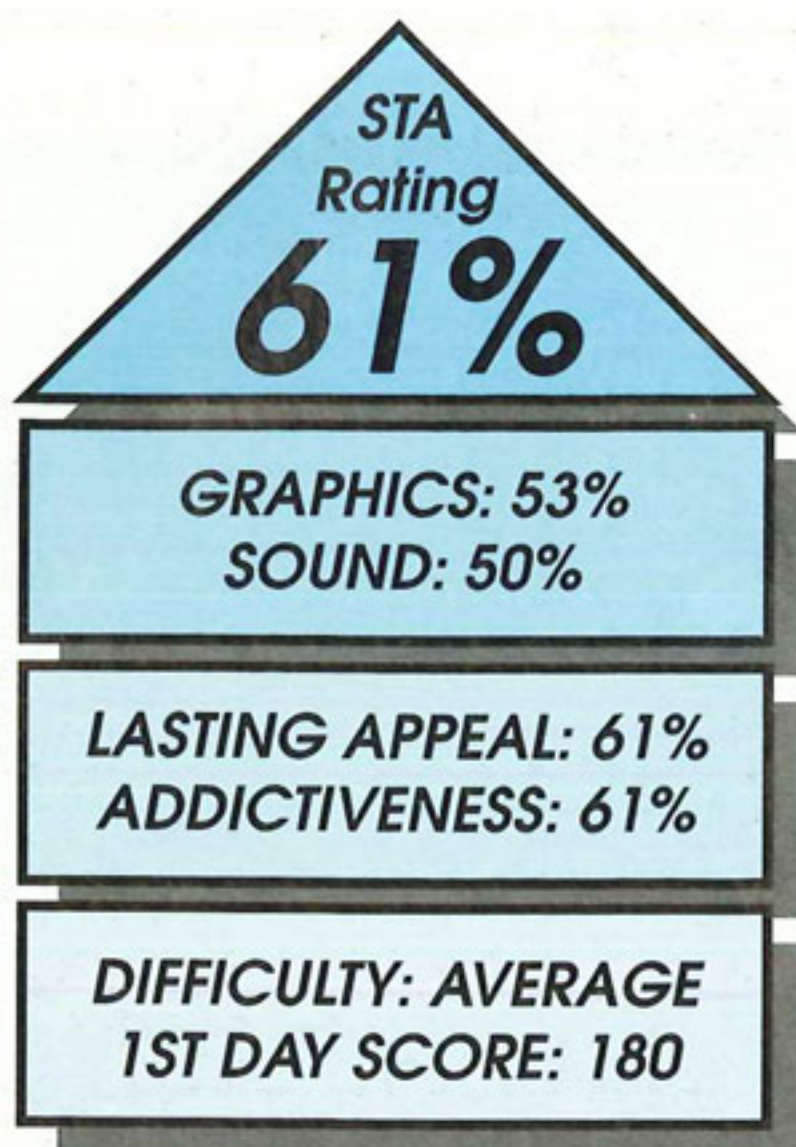
GRAPHICS: 65%
SOUND: 58%

LASTING APPEAL: 75%
ADDICTIVENESS: 76%

DIFFICULTY: HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 54333

The final confrontation between you and the evil nemesis, the Joker, occurs in the thousand-foot-tall cathedral. Here you have to negotiate the maze-like interior and make your way up to the roof-top where the Joker will finally meet his match.





It's up at the ockey and it's ST Action to Throw. Oh my word! One Hundred and Eighty - marvelous.



It's tense out there today as John Lowe comes to throw for the match. He lets the first dart fly and it hits the board squarely, earning him sixty points - only sixty to go. The next arrow scores twenty and with his last throw he gets double top - forty points. I can just imagine it now, all of the armchair sportsmen (and women) out there thinking: "Great, another game where all I have to do is switch on the computer and play". And how right you

Gosh, I'm sorry, Mr Lowe, and I'm sorry, Gremlin, too, but I just found Ultimate Darts anything but ultimate. Okay, so the package contains just about every type of variation ever devised, but when it actually comes down to the game, it really doesn't come up to the ockey. Gremlin have adopted the wavering hand routine which was originally used, and better implemented, in Macsen's Bullseye. In this game the hand makes more flinching movements which isn't as effective. There are some nice touches such as flight parting from dart and dropping out of the board; but on the whole, far more fun can be derived from the actual game which, let's face it, can be set up and played in the smallest of homes, so why bother with a simulation of the game?

JS

"Thud, thud, thud... One hundred and eighty! Take to the Ockey and throw your arrows in John Lowe's Ultimate Darts by Gremlin."

ULTIMATE DARTS

GREMLIN (£19.99)

I have never really played darts as a hobby; I used to play it when I was younger but that is about the level of my ability. But with John Lowe's Ultimate Darts you don't have to be good to play the computer game. I thought the idea of the soccer and cricket darts was a nice change from the normal 301-up game. The graphics are not particularly astounding, nor is the sound, but there is not a lot you can do with a game like this. The controls are via the mouse, and with this you select the type of game you want to play - my favourite game being round the board. Personally, I would not have gone out and bought this for £19.99 but after playing it I was quite surprised and would recommend this to anyone looking for a game of this type - you could do far worse.

AS

are. Ultimate Darts is a simple arrows game with a few added extras. The main menu gives you several options: playing in a competition; throwing in an exhibition match against the greatest dart players; choosing the level of play (1-4); the number of players (1-8); playing round the board; and either Soccer or Cricket Darts!

When playing an exhibition match, you can pick from a list of sixteen professionals, including people like Keith Deller and Eric Bristow, and throwing in a competition puts you up against another human player or the computer. When playing in a 'round the board' match you have to throw your darts into the treble or doubles section (chosen by you) of each number, starting at number one and going through to twenty. When in two-player mode you have to wait to throw after your opponent which lets you know how much you have to beat. There is a major variant that most other darts games do not have, Soccer and Cricket Darts. In Soccer Darts, the

person who scores the most with three darts makes his team attack and run up the field, and if you beat your opponent enough times you will eventually score a goal. The winner is the side with the most goals after a predetermined time, ranging from fifteen to forty-five minutes, which is pre-selected by you. In Cricket darts, you have to select the number of overs the game will last for and, when that is done, you either begin bowling or batting. To get one of the opponents' men out you have to score a bulls eye and when you have done this to all of his men, it is your turn to bat. The higher the score, the better, and if you get more runs than him, you win. So if you're ready to play with your darts in one hand and a pint of beer in the other, go and score one hundred and eighty and be the envy of all your friends.

STA



Running up and down a football pitch is not the sort of thing I would expect to see in a darts simulation, but this is one of the things that makes Ultimate Darts different from the rest.

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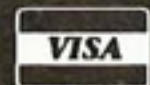
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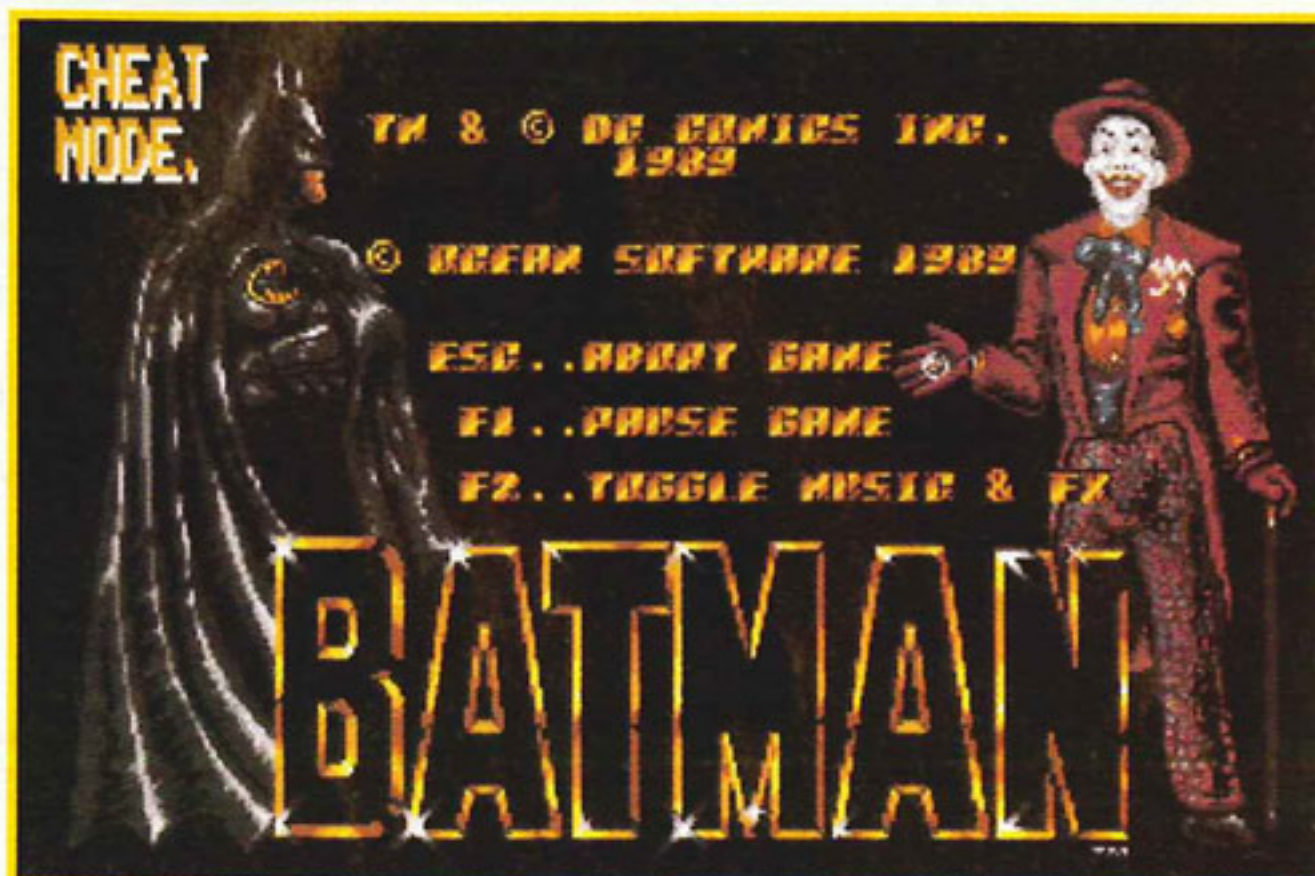
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GIVING THE GAME AWAY (GTGA)

Well, hello there, and welcome to yet another fun-filled Giving The Game Away. This month we've oodles of hints and tips for your delight and delectation. Prizes this month go to Martin Rogers for his brilliant Batman cheat and to Jeff Stowers for his comprehensive guide to Total Eclipse. Remember, if you've found a cheat or discovered a handy hint, send it in. You never know, you just might win a prize for your troubles.

BATMAN - OCEAN



Cor, that was quick. No sooner has the caped crusader hit the streets than some clever fellow has sent in an invaluable cheat. Apparently, Martin Rogers from Twickenham also reads our sister magazine Amiga Action. Their tipster, Doug Johns, printed a cheat for the Amiga version whereby you type in the word 'JAMMM' whilst the intro screen is displayed. Well, young Master Rogers has discovered

that that particular cheat produces nothing. However, should you hold down the shift key and type in, 'MAJJJJ', you should be rewarded with the words, 'Cheat Mode' at the top of the screen. Now, unlimited lives are yours and, should you find any of the levels a touch too difficult, pressing the 'F10' key will skip to the next scene. Thanks Martin!



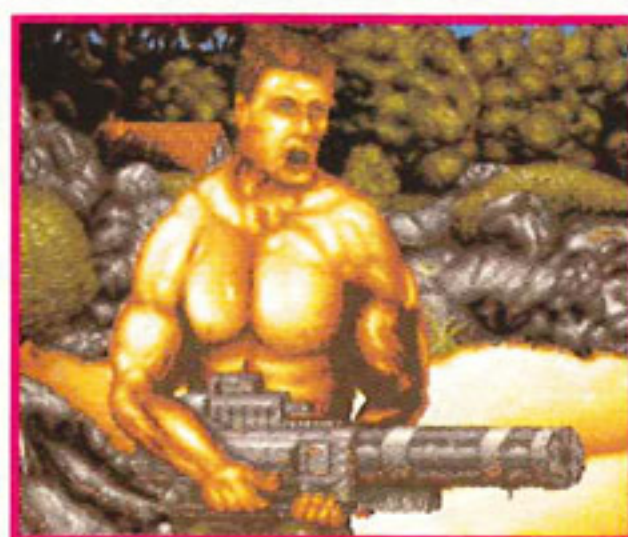
AFTERBURNER - ACTIVISION

Right, open your software box and aim for the disks at the back of it. Okay, see that one by



Activision? Yeh, Afterburner, that's the one. Before you start to play, set the mouse sensitivity to the highest point available. Now, when you start playing, move the mouse around in erratic circles. This will cause your plane to miss almost all of the on-screen obstacles; keeping your finger on the firebutton will also cause your score to rocket as you'll also manage to destroy countless enemy aircraft. Once again, thanks go to Alan Clarke for that handy little tip.

DOGS OF WAR - ELITE



So, you're having trouble in rounding up all the world's crims in this decidedly average massacre'em-up, are you? Well worry no more. Whilst playing type in the name "TIMBO" and then press the "F5" key. You should find the the game's sprite detection is switched off, enabling you wipe out entire armies single-handedly!

BLOODWYCH - IMAGEWORKS

Right, just a quickie here. There have been loads of you who have sent in tips for this brilliant role-playing adventure. Thanks especially go to John Logan of Glasgow and to Steven Atkinson of Manchester for their detailed notes. Anyway, here are ten handy facts to bear in mind.

1. The best armour to wear is crystal plate, together with gloves and a warshield.

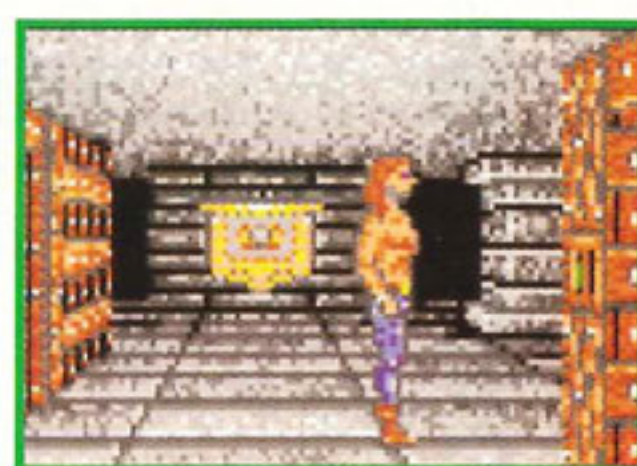
2. If a ring is worn it enables the wearer to cast spells of the ring colour without using spell points.

3. Used rings can be replenished by using the 'recharge' spell.

4. It is advisable to place items on the floor when you find yourself in a room with transporters. That way you'll know where you've been.

5. Always try and obtain a range of spells - not just the offensiv ones.

6. Should you run low on cash, place a metal weapon in



your character' hand and cast 'alchemy'.

7. Characters can wear two rings at the same time.

8. An assassin does more damage from behind with a stealth blade.

9. The safe way of discovering what's behind a door is to save your game first and then open it.

10. Serpent Slime increases hit points.

Dragon Ale increases vitality. Moon Elixir increases spell points.

Brimstone Broth increases all of the above attributes.



ATARI...THE POWER BEHIND

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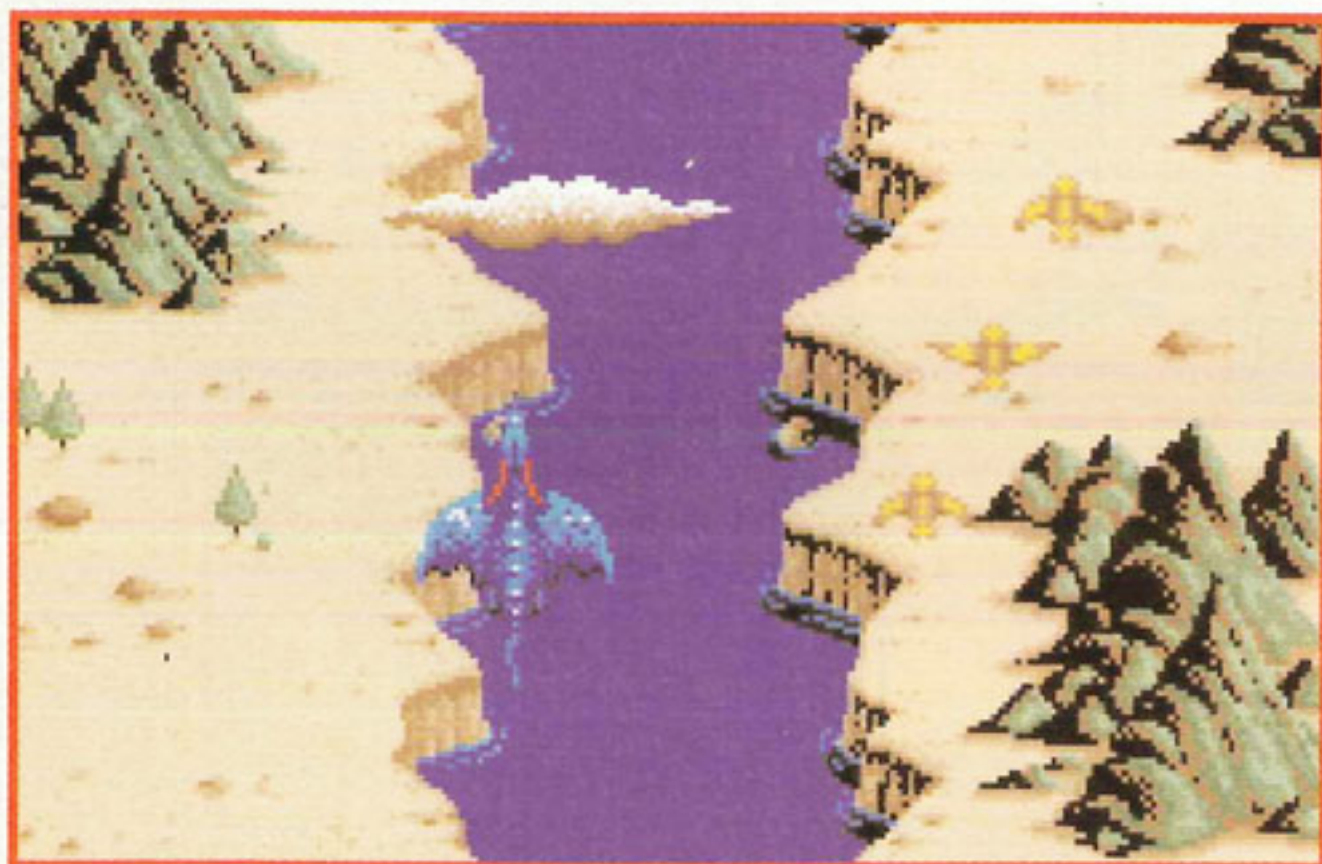
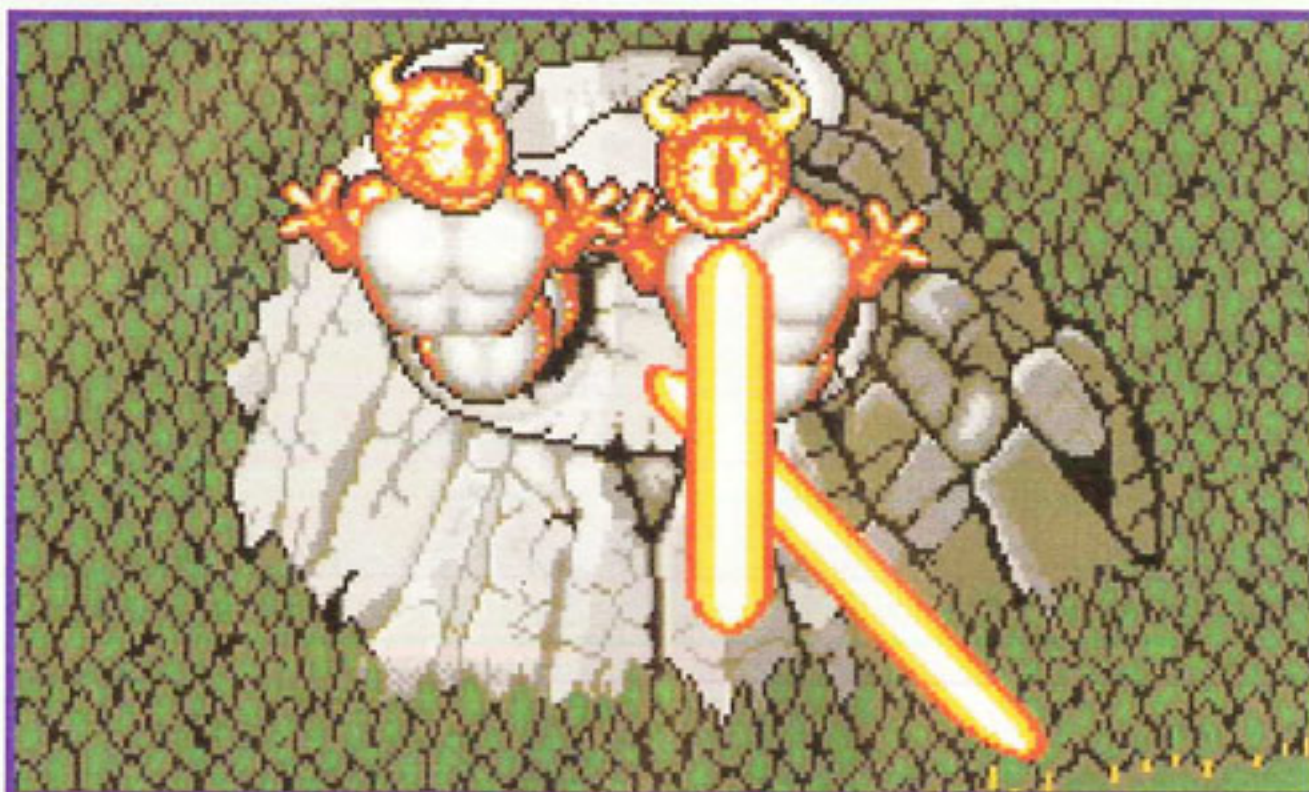
ARC, P.O. Box 555, Slough SL2 5BZ.

GIVING THE GAME AWAY (GTGA)

GEMINI WING - VIRGIN

We weren't too keen on this shoot'em-up. Still, I'm sure there are many of you who are trying really hard to get through the different levels. So to help you on your way here's a level-skip cheat from Paul Boughton of Camberly. Simply type in the codeword and you should instantly get transported to the corresponding level.

Level 3 - classics
Level 4 - whizzkid
Level 5 - gunshots
Level 6 - doodguyz
Level 7 - d.gibson



A.P.B. - DOMARK



OK, I guess there must be quite a few who are finding life as a top traffic cop a trifle difficult. Well, if you're getting more than your fair share of demerits, here's a handy hint to help you. While you are driving around the mean streets, keep your finger held firmly on the fire button. This will cause your siren to sound and everybody will clear the streets, thus enabling you to

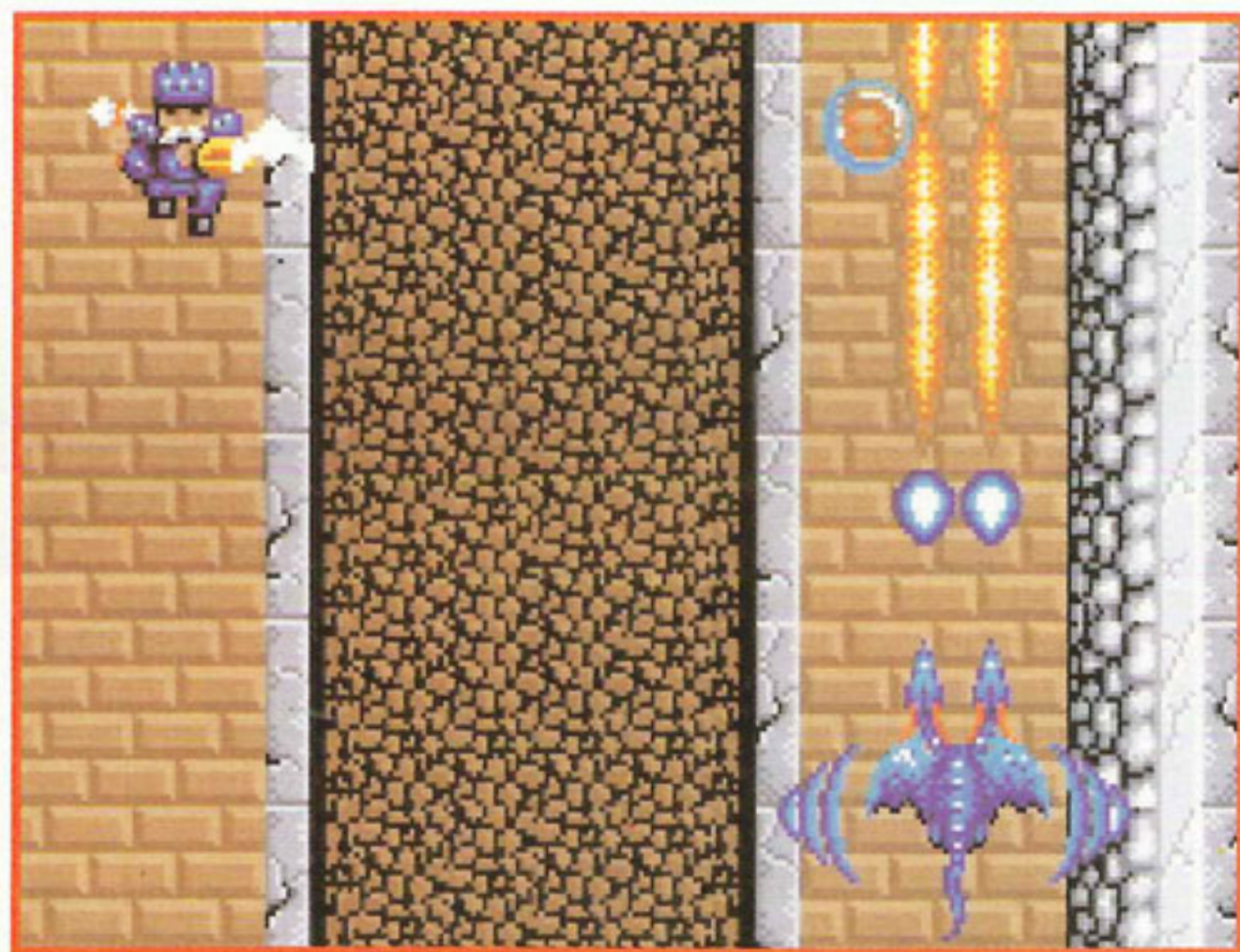
drive along at tremendous speeds without having to dodge cars. Right, all you rookies get out there but, before you go, let's hear a big cheer for Alan Clarke of Southport for that one.



DRAGON SPIRIT - DOMARK

OK, there must be quite a few of you trying to conquer Domark's Dragon Spirit. Well fret no more, because thanks to David McNairn you can now skip to any level you want. So, what do you have to do to achieve this miracle of teleportation then? Well, while playing the game

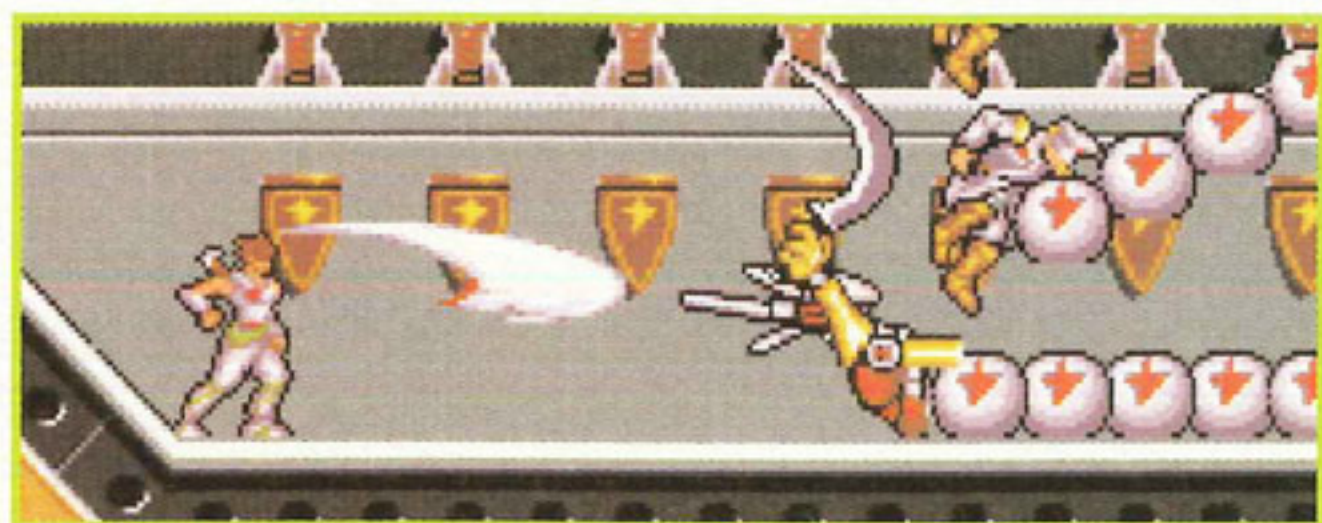
simply pause the action by pressing the 'F9' key. Next, enter the slogan 'DRAGON HEAD' and then press the 'F10' button. To skip between levels simply press the corresponding number key on the main keyboard.



STRIDER - US GOLD

Right, there must be many of you out there who are still trying to take on the might of the Master. Well, did you know the game has a built-in level skip option? To activate it, simply pause the game by pressing 'F9'. Now, hold down the 'HELP' key, the left 'SHIFT' button, and the '1' key on the main

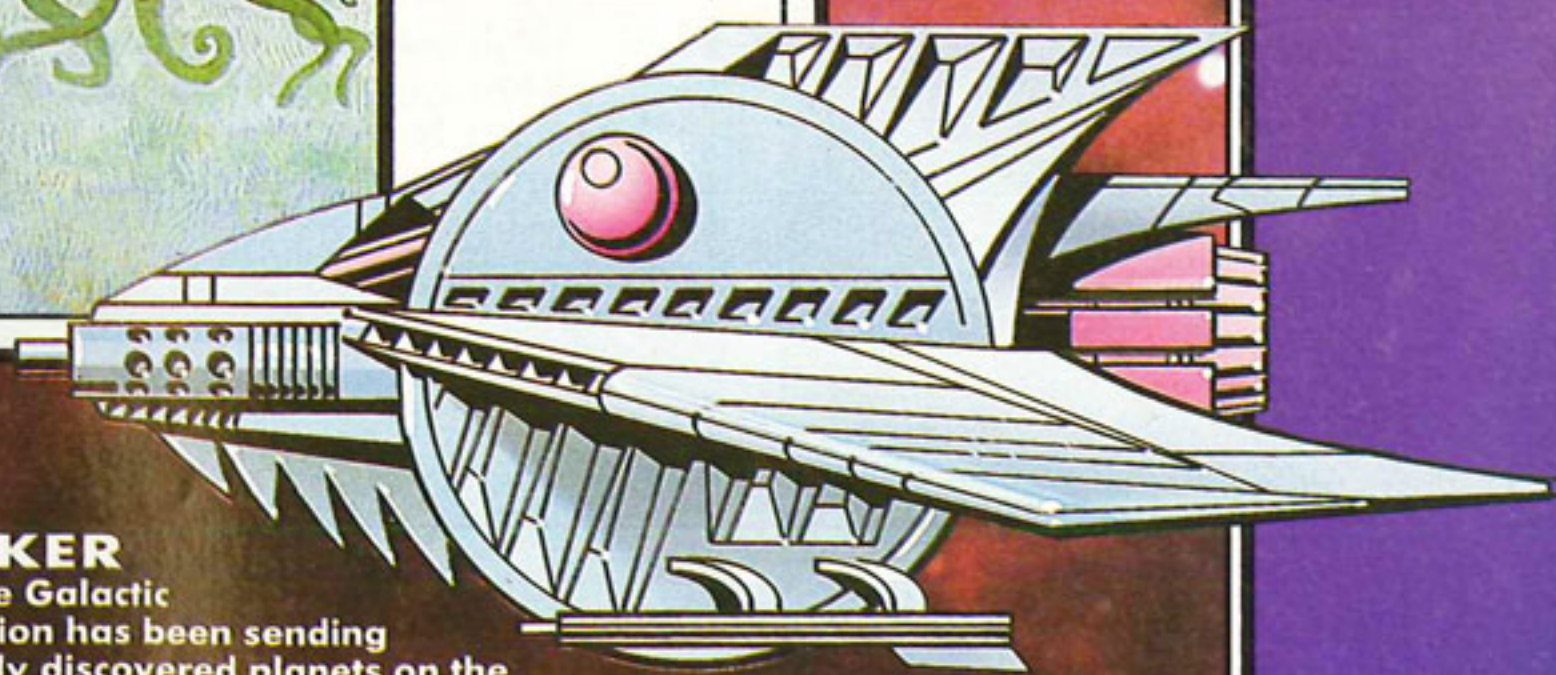
keyboard. Release all three buttons and press 'F10' to restart. Now, press buttons '1' to '5' to jump between levels and 'F1' to 'F4' to skip through the stages in each level. So, all that's left to do is thank those responsible for giving you that cheat. Namely, U.S. Gold of Birmingham.



ATARI®...THE POWER BEHIND



ARCADE POWER



Screen shots from various systems.

STAR BREAKER

The year is 3189. The Galactic Exploitation Federation has been sending mining corps to newly discovered planets on the periphery for thirteen years. New Chicago is one of the New City Systems of planets lifeless, except for the mining colonies, but rich in mineral and precious ore deposits. Members of the Rampon Farmer's Guild have overrun New Chicago in the miles of underground tunnelling created by the mining colonies. The directors of the Galactic Exploitation Federation have offered a substantial bounty to anyone clearing the planet of its unwanted visitors. You and your ship SS Star Breaker change course and head for New Chicago

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GIVING THE GAME AWAY (GTGA)



Last month we helped all you Megablasters by telling you what to buy for your ship in the first three levels of Xenon II. Now, seeing how you should all be familiar with the early stages, we complete our look at intergalactic shopping, Xenite style. Thanks again go to Steve Peiris and Michael Neri who sent in the tips and thank you to everyone else who also came up with the same idea.

Level Four

Shop A: Take this opportunity to buy a full capacity of side shots.

Buy power-ups and health. Finally, buy a Nashwan power-up to avoid collecting the two rear shots that appear.

Mid-level Mutation: On meeting this monster avoid the fireballs and move quickly to the left. Attempt to shoot the creature's smaller heads with your side shots. Next, aim carefully at the end of the tail with your laser. Having destroyed the tail, make for the bottom of the screen, watch out for the head as it will lash out about two or three times. When at the bottom of the screen, sweep backwards and forwards, keeping your laser beams aimed directly at the monster's head.

Shop B: Shell out and buy a

fourth laser. Add to it with a power-up and then purchase any health you may require. You may also like to take this opportunity to try out a few of the other weapon systems.

End-of-level Nasty: Before coming into contact with this creature make sure your ship is positioned at the bottom of the screen. Avoid the creature's tongue and move to the top left portion of the screen. Blast at the eyes with your side shots while moving as far up the screen as is possible. Keep your side shots going and the monster will eventually fade away into oblivion.

Level Five

Shop A: Hooray! You've reached Colin's bargain basement. This is where you're likely to make mega-bucks. Sell everything you've got and then buy them back at a large profit. Finally, buy extra lives with the remainder of your ill-gotten gains.

Mid-level Horror: When tackling this rather large mutation you should keep out of the centre of the screen. Instead, keep to the sides and blast away at the side turrets with your lasers. Finally, dodge to and fro blasting the large turrets in the process.

End-of-level Attacker: On approaching this creature you should aim carefully, and take



out its boosters with your lasers. Shoot at the smaller turrets while avoiding any oncoming drones and bullets. Carefully pick off the laser beamers and then finally, move to the bottom of the screen and strike the centre of the beast.

General Tips

1. Try to remember attack patterns.
2. Use a joystick with autofire.
3. Try not to shoot the segment worms on the first and second levels as it is both confusing and dangerous.
4. Try to stay alive and not to collect money on the butterfly stage of level four. Stay on one side and as soon as there is a lapse, quickly move up.
5. Nothing more, just remember, it isn't impossible - get blasting!

NEW ZEALAND STORY - OCEAN

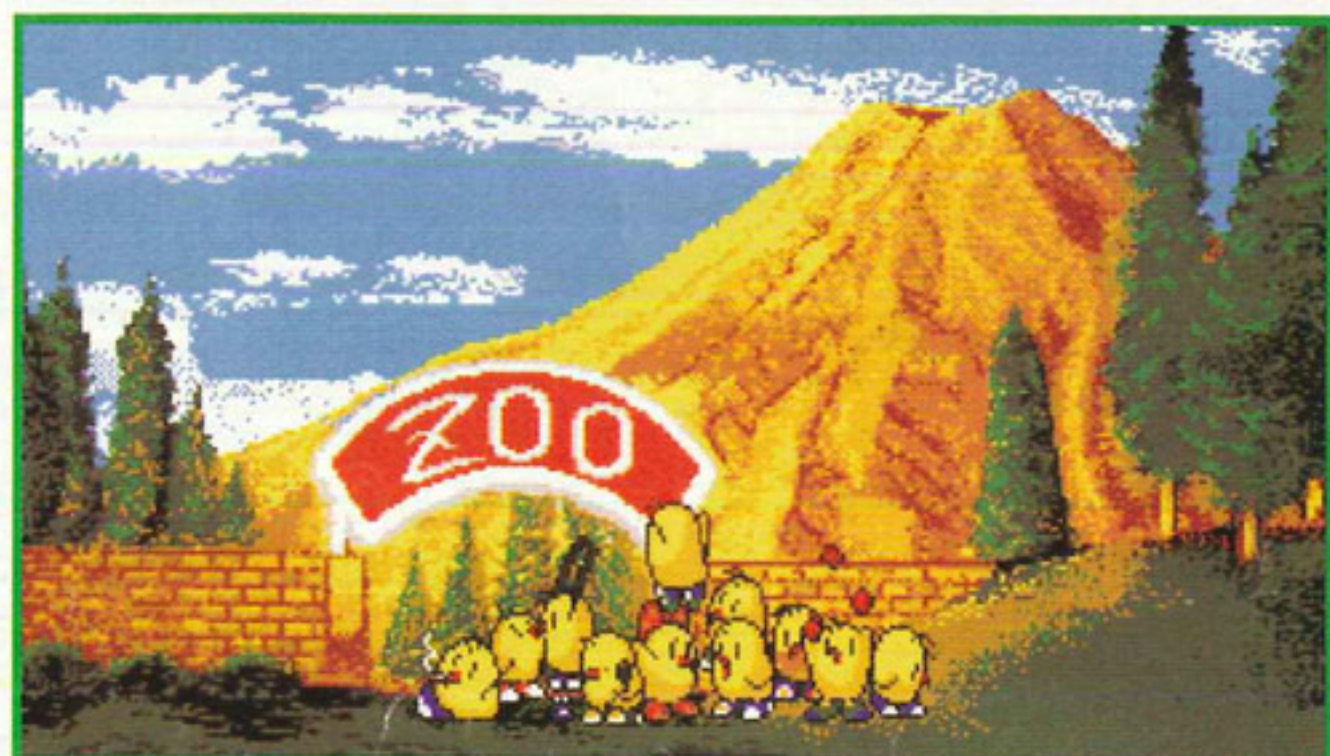


So you thought New Zealand Story was going to be easy, did you? Despite numerous attempts you still can't get off the north island eh? Well, you're in luck my friend. Alan Clarke from Southport Merseyside has managed to locate a hidden cheat mode to help you on your way. Now, I'm not really allowed

to print naughty words so I'm afraid you'll have to guess the letters which have been replaced by asterisks.

Load up the game in the usual manner and start playing. Pause the game by pressing 'UNDO' and then press the 'M' key. At this point you should hear the sound of a laser gun. Now type, without spaces, the phrase: 'MOTHERF* *KENKIWIBAS**RD'. Again, you should hear a confirmation sound, this time it's the one you get when you pick up a bible. By this point you should be ready to play again. For your trouble you'll have infinite lives and, by pressing 'HELP', you'll be able to skip onto the next level.

The Leopard Seal was selling kiwis in various places.



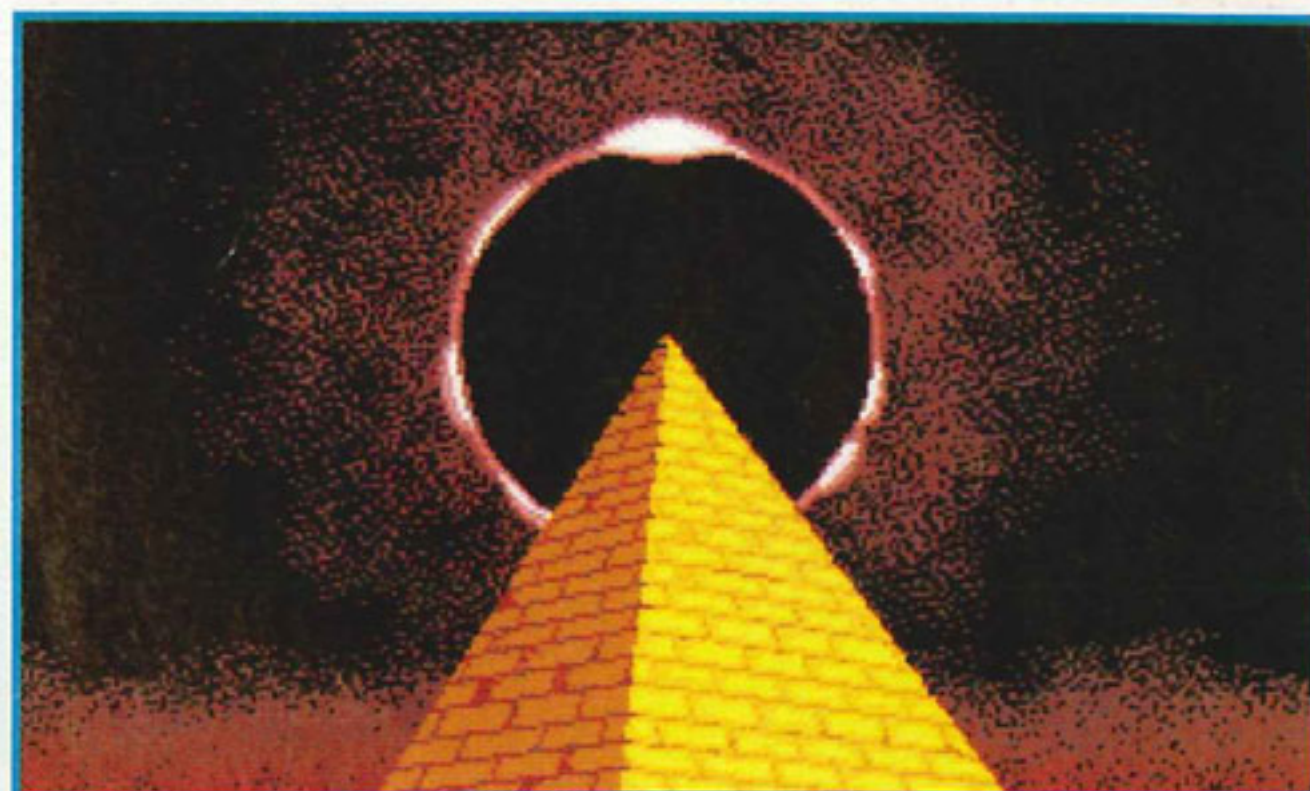
GIVING THE GAME AWAY (GTGA)

TOTAL ECLIPSE - MICROSTATUS

We all have Jeff Stowers of Eccles to thank for this full solution to Microstatus's Egyptian classic, Total Eclipse. Right, make sure you have your "mummy's" permission to play the game and do the following:

Go to the plane and collect the Ankh. Next, go around the back of the pyramid and shoot out the door, enter into the darkness and collect the treasure. Retrace your footsteps and return to the front of the pyramid. There, get some water and the Ankh, go through the H-B and recover the treasure. Shoot the block and climb up the stairs that appear. Go to H-G and, using the H key, duck under

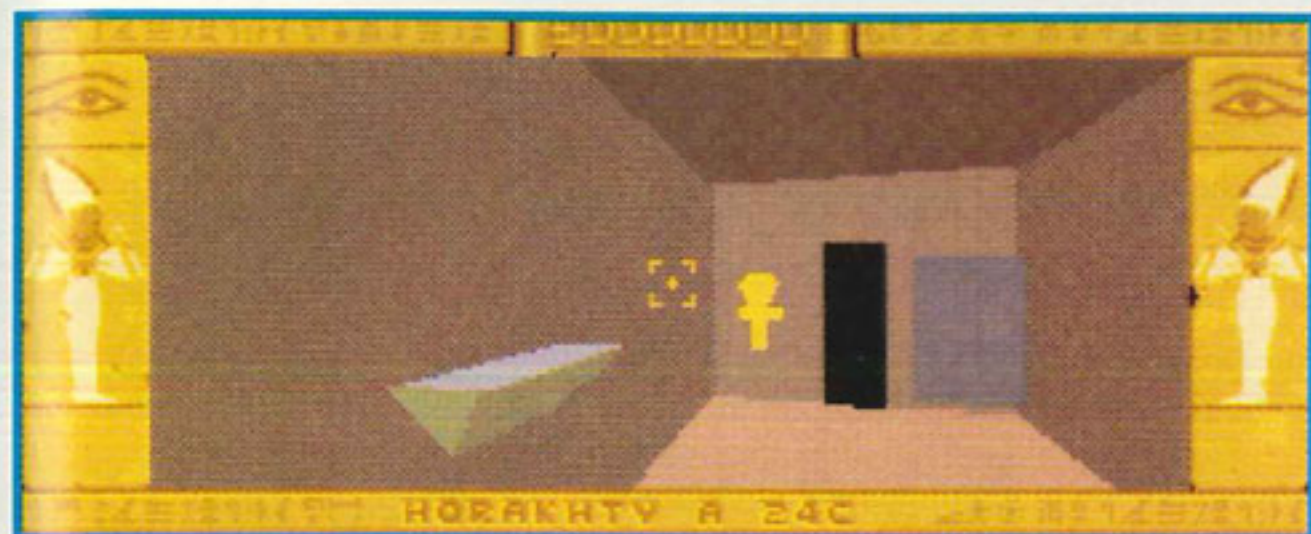
Search around the chamber for a symbol resembling an "H". Shoot at it and then race back into the tent. Down the steps, walk forward to I-D and then back towards H-G. Move straight across to H-J and get the Ankh. Pull yourself up the steps to H-I, use the torch and walk into the pillar. Back away from it and then turn around to find the treasure. Travel through the centre doors to get to H-B. Carefully, attempt to cross the plank to get yourself to location H-C. Cross the water using the gap and you should find yourself at K-E. Turn right and ascend the steps to arrive at K-F. Cross the room and squeeze through



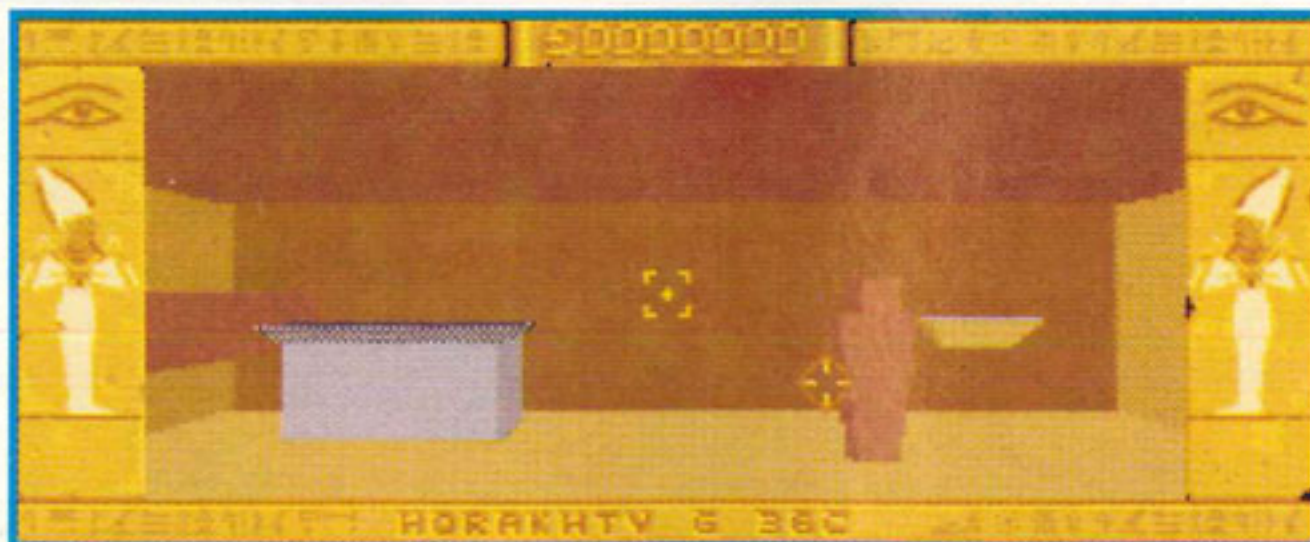
the gap in order to get to K-C. Jump down to find the Ankh and then climb back up. Walk through the first door to get to K-B, take a left to get to K-E. Get the treasure and then shoot the red wall about seven times in order to discover the hidden Ankh. Return to location H-C, turn right and pass a flight of stairs. Go through the door and shoot several times. Back out and return to location H-I. Climb the stairs and shoot the floor all the time. Remember to walk forward and then get the treasure. Back up and go left to H-E, cross the small wall and arrive at location P-F. Shoot the rope and retrieve the Ankh. Next, go to room N-F, crawl under the steps to arrive at chamber N-D. Cross the planks in order to get to room N-B and turn left to find the treasure. Turn left, under the steps, and head for room N-A. Walk down the steps and then up the steps behind the mummy to room R-C.



Walk through the middle door on the far wall and then down the steps. Stand next to the large stone and push it towards the steps and then out to R-E. Keep pushing the stone through R-D, then R-B, and finally out the front of the pyramid. Make your way back to chamber H-B and then up the far steps to location H-E. Get both the treasure and the Ankh and race up the steps to room P-F. Walk across the room to N-F and then make your way back to R-C. Clamber through the second hole on the right and then, turning right, head for yet another hole across the steps. Shoot the face in the centre and return to chamber N-A. Travel to room N-B, turn left, and ascend the stairs making your way to location P-A. Turn to your right and stand in front of the second block. Examine the stone and shoot at the gap. Quickly, run up the stairs that appear and you should find yourself at location P-B. Get the treasure then shoot the bottom step in order to uncover another exit. Descend to arrive at room P-C where you should uncover yet more treasure. Walk through the barrier to get to room P-E and then up to chamber S-B. Duck down and walk in small steps upwards until you reach the very edge of the ledge. Next, press "H" a few times until you appear in room S-A. Turn left, or right if you so choose, and shoot at the statue. Having shot it about forty times you will have won. Sit back and enjoy the fireworks.



the bar. By now you should be getting a little thirsty so look behind the coffin to find some more water. Turn around and shoot at the coffin lid in order to find yet more treasure. Next, clamber under the bar to H-D. There, shoot the spider near its mouth and descend the stairs behind. Enter the gap and push the obstructing block out of the way. Now, to enter I-D, go down the steps and turn left. Crawl through the hole to enter I-A, walk right and crawl through another hole to get to I-B, turn right and enter yet another hole to get to I-C. Next, you should go forward, through a hole, into location I-I. Make a sharp U-turn and back out in order to get to area I-F. Climb up the steps and out, turning right in the process.



TOTAL ECLIPSE

Dungeons & Disk Drives

Well here we are at the end of another eventful year. Outside the wind is howling around the battlements, rippling the overflowing moat and lashing the waves up around the Dungeon walls. Even the Troll has decided to leave his lair under the moat bridge and bunk down next to the fire with us, here in the Dungeon. Having him inside is trouble enough, but he would insist on hanging his sock up early for Christmas and now nobody can sleep for the smell!

While we sat around the fire, wearing clothes pegs, and waiting for Christmas, our talk turned to our favourite adventures. We then realised that many new adventurers would soon be arriving, clutching their new Atari's and looking for the best adventures and RPG games. The monthly magazines review the best of the new releases, but how do you find out what's the best of all? To help you 'pick out a plum' for Christmas, instead of a 'turkey', we've drawn up a list of our favourite all-time greats. Not only are these great games, but we've ensured that the difficulty level is suitable for old-hands and newcomers alike.

Best Graphic Adventures

SPACE QUEST II (Sierra-on-Line)

Roger Wilco's continuing efforts to save humanity from alien invaders disguised as Insurance Salesmen. Criss-cross the space-lanes seeking the asteroid fortress of the enemy, thwart the hunger of the swamp monster and make monkeys out of the apemen soldiers. This game is full of laughs, and whilst it has some sneaky puzzles, most players would be able to solve it without tearing out too much hair.

SHADOWGATE (ICOM Simulations)

Castle corridors packed with monsters and magic, the game uses a clever point and click mouse selection technique. Sound effects and animation make this a winner for the whole family.

KINGS QUEST III (Sierra-on-Line)

Must be the biggest selling graphic adventure. Control the actions of the animated prince condemned to work in a mountain castle. Learn the evil wizard's spells, then escape to cross the sea and rescue the princess. A colourful



Castle corridors packed with monsters and magic.

and spellbinding game suitable for young and old alike.

Best All-Text Adventures

This is a difficult one, as tastes vary so widely. One adventurer's meat is definitely another Troll's poison, but here are a couple of games which are definitely fun.

BUREAUCRACY (Infocom)

This game sets you the hilarious task of untangling a web of bureaucratic red-tape caused by you changing your house and job. Without money or travel documents, you must get to an important appointment whilst keeping your blood-pressure below explosion level.

WISHBRINGER (Infocom)

A traditional adventure in a world of Trolls, Witches and hungry mailboxes. A

little easier than some games, but lots of fun. You play the role of a simple, day-dreaming postman who is pitched into a world of magic.

JINXTER (Magnetic Scrolls)

Beautiful graphic screens accompany some neat puzzles involving magic and a funny, cockney Time Guardian. Find the scattered pieces of the magical charm bracelet to restore peace to the kingdom.

No doubt you've got a better list. If so, write and tell us - I'm sure the Troll will be only too pleased to hear that you disagree with him!

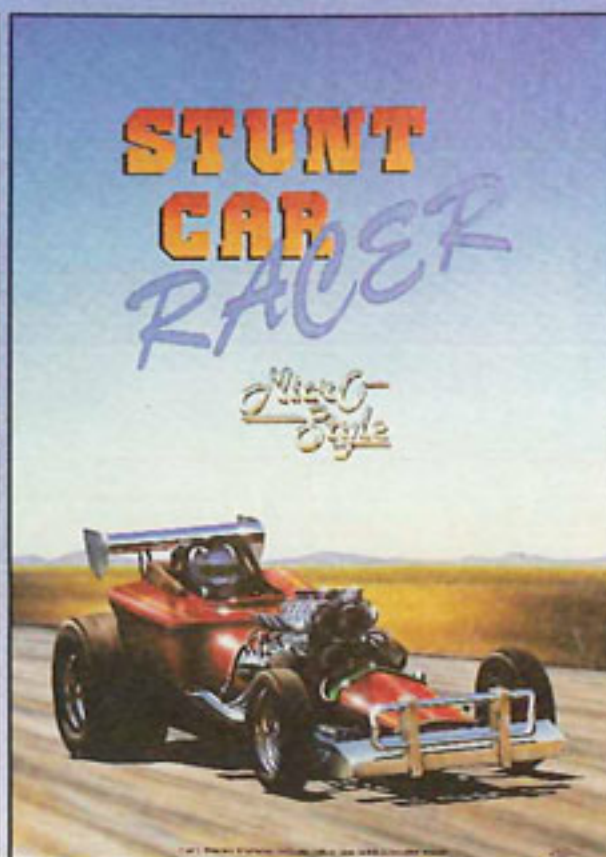
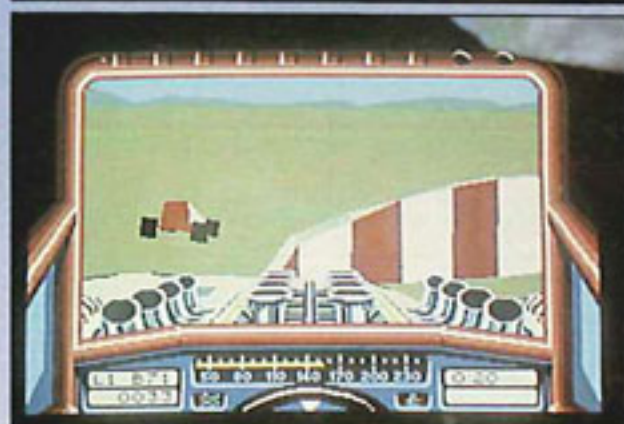
Best Role Playing Games

DUNGEON MASTER (Faster than Light).

Without doubt one of the all-time

"THE ULTIMATE DRIVING EXPERIENCE"

C & VG



STUNT CAR RACER

"The tracks are superbly designed starting with a fairly straightforward but lumpy oval and progressing to such delights complete with massive (& I mean MASSIVE) jump & roller coaster track which has enough hills to turn the stomach of the hardest drivers." – C & VG

"Quite simply Stunt Car is the best racing game yet seen on a home computer – check it out." – C & VG

"Stunt Car is utterly brilliant and offers adrenaline pumping gut wrenching high speed action that will keep you engrossed for months – C & VG

"An action packed game that had us on the edge of our seats." – TGM

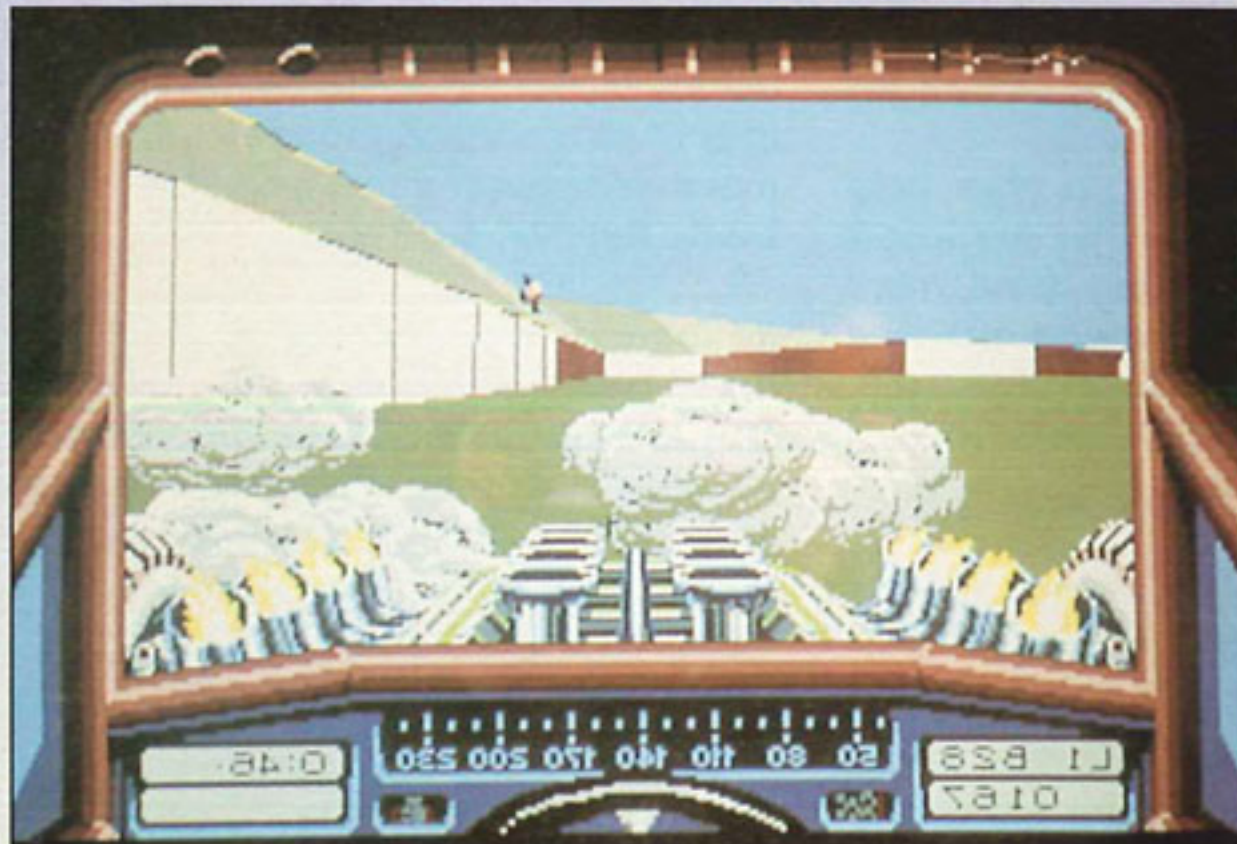
RVF

The motor bike simulator of the Honda 750 RVF. Race on Clubman and world famous tracks.

"A near perfect blend of simulation & action" – ACE

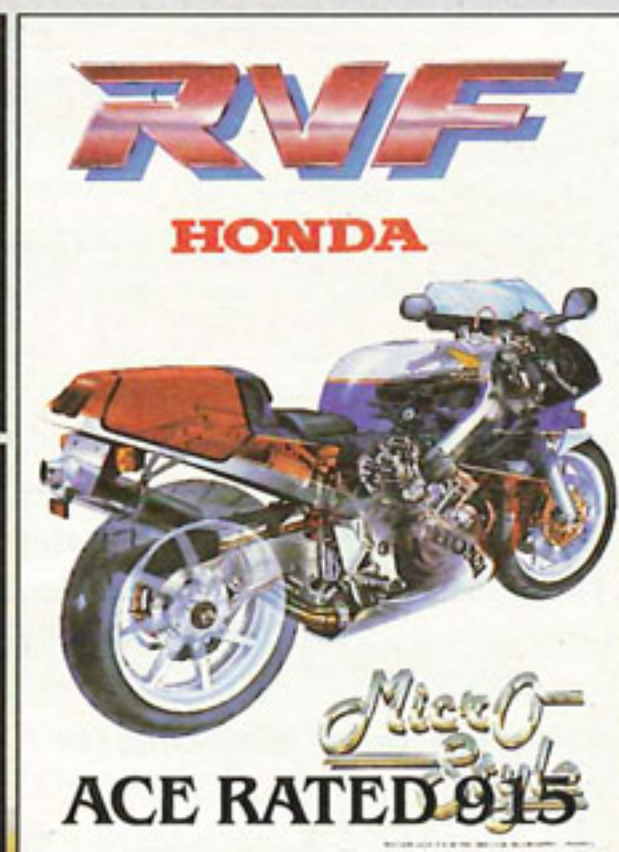
"Amazing graphics" – CU

"If this, as MicroProse maintain is the shape of the Amiga games to come then everybody should buy an Amiga now" – CU



93% TGM

93% C & V



C+VG
HIT!



Games for Adults

MicroStyle

A DIVISION OF MICROPROSE SOFTWARE

MicroProse, Unit 1, Hampton Road Industrial Estate, Tetbury, Glos, GL8 8DA.

stein

Is there anyone out there, who can actually score maximum points in any of the Sierra quests.

In Manhunter II, investigate the bank and you may stumble upon this rather unfortunate fellow.



great games. Use sword and sorcery to battle with animated monsters. Tons of strategy, puzzles and great atmosphere. The game that brought Role Playing Games to the mainstream game-player. WARNING - Highly Addictive, and this time we mean it!

BARDS TALE (Electronic Arts)

A great favourite with RPG fanatics with a plethora of spells, weapons and monsters. A little more staid than Dungeon Master, but still a classic.

Mitch.

TROLL LETTERS

Evade the Gas in the Police Quest II Sewer

I have arrived in Steelton and searched the local park, arresting the mugger along the way. Uncovering the manhole and descending into the sewers it soon became apparent that a gas-mask was needed. Where is it?

A. Whitehead, Manchester

I've had no end of letters from people asking this self-same question. Personally I never noticed any smell when I was down there, humans are obviously all delicate flowers. There is a gas-mask, but to get to it you must choose the right path. Whichever way you go, you will pass through a gas pocket (I've got two of those myself!) If you choose the right way, and move quickly enough, you will reach the box holding the mask. Having climbed down the ladder, go off screen right, then go right again. Once you have finished with the mask, Mitch would like you to parcel it up and send it to the Dungeon before it's too late. Don't ask me what he means!

Millenium Muddlers

I've been getting lots of mail from poor, benighted, muddle-headed humans who are stuck with this game and for some reason keep plaguing me with ques-

tions. Look, it aint an adventure, and I don't know the answers. That goes especially for the loony who signed himself 'The Topazian Necromancer'. Anyone living near Cardigan Close, Bletchley better keep a look out for this chap because he is definitely 'out of his tree'!

Now if anyone wants to offer help with this game they can let me know and I'll publish their address. Mind you, I would think twice before you offer, he might write to you as well.

Are you the 'Slime ball Champion' of Leisure Suit Larry?

I have scored 216 points in this game, but can't get the maximum although I think I have collected all the items and completed all the tasks. I think that either the dog or the cabaret is involved.

R. Evans, Hanworth

The ability to obtain maximum points in this game is the sign of a misspent youth. Only a thoroughly corrupt player can get full points. Many people have sent me solutions, but they never seem to get anywhere near maximum. Have you performed 'wotsit', wearing a 'thingy', with 'Er Upstairs'? Have you been rude to the comedian?

Here is a challenge to anyone who thinks he's really corrupt. Whoever sends me the solution that has most points shall be crowned - 'Slime-ball of the Month'!

Incidentally, if that dog attempts a repeat of his last performance on my leg, I'll personally arrange a cabaret involving it and a large cucumber which should earn me maximum points in one move!

Turn back the Tide of Dungeons Master's Water Monsters

New terrors have assailed us. They came quietly, unseen and without warn-

ing. These creatures were made entirely of water and could flow under sealed walls. There is no escape apart from the fact that water, as we all know, cannot flow upstairs. I have seen the lack of effect both cold steel and magical bombardment has on these creatures. I use the last of my manna to send this urgent message by way of flying scroll.

Leslie Rayner, Sudbury

Its the old Vorpall Blade, Horn of Fear and Spirit Bolt combination you are looking for my son. Blow the horn and the 'tide' will turn. Follow it, slashing and casting and it will vapourize like the ale from Mitch's silver tankard on a Saturday night.

Keeping an 'Eye Out' for Kings Quest IV

In Kings Quest IV, how do you escape the zombies in the graveyard, and what do you do with the baby and the trap-door in the Mansion?

Alan & Scott

I normally dispose of zombies with a flame-thrower or a bazooka. Once night falls, various ghosts appear inside the mansion and it's your job to recover whatever they want from the correct grave outside. Nightfall turns the graveyard into a Michael Jackson Thriller video and only magic will keep the zombies away. The item you need can be obtained from the three witches. These witches are not 'armless' - they're 'eyeless'. They pass the one good eye they have between themselves. (Sounds like the brain-cell used by the ST Action's editorial staff!) By grabbing the eye, you can force them to swap for something magical.

Illegal Copying in Space Quest III

I am in Scumsoft H.Q. walking round in circles. How do I get through the door with the security keycard and facial scanner?

I must say, I don't believe your reviewer N.C. who 'claims' to have completed SQIII in under 2 hours. I have had the game for 3 months. I suppose he claims also to be rich, good looking, has a house in Monaco and his own personal jet.

You must help or I shall pray every night for you to turn beautiful. (like me)
Valerie Cooper, Brierley Hill.

Tut! tut! N.C. is none other than our own dearly-beloved editor. I can assure you that he did finish it in two hours. I know this, as I noted the first and last times he rang the Dungeon for help, and I'm sure it was no more than two hours between.

The scanner problem is an easy one, in fact I don't think N.C. rang up about that one. The solution is first to steal the ID card off the desk of Scumsoft's boss and then use the Xerox machine to make a copy of his picture on the wall. Insert the keycard and hold up the photocopy.

Dialing Problems with the Police Quest Series

For those poor souls still trying desperately to contact Directory enquiries in Police Quest I and II, here is how to do it.

Getting a taxi in P.Q.I. Dial 411 and ask for TAXI. It's 555-9222.

Finding the telephone number of Steelton Police Station, in P.Q. II - Dial 0, say STEELTON, then Police Station. It's 407-555-2677.

Another of Dungeon Master's Secret Alcoves

I have found a secret room on Level 5,

Having trouble finding a taxi? If so try using the phone in your office.



just around the corner from the large room containing the invisible transporters. It's five paces from the corner, on the right side of the corridor. I found the room using the magic vision spell. I can see that it contains a necklace and a winged snake, but I can't find a way in. I know the wisdom of the great Troll will prevail.

Dominic Archer, Sidcup

Well I do know the answer, but I'll confess that it was not I who worked it out. The door to this room will open automatically when you travel to the far end of a certain corridor. This corridor ends halfway along the north wall of Level 5, above the transporter room.

Turning 'Bat Vomit' into Gold Dust in Manhunter II

I have been to the Bank of Canton, Warehouse, Ferry Building, Fountain, the Pier and the Manhunter's house. I have found the MAD, ID card, Dragon Note, Cloth, Paper, License, Laundry ticket, Fang, Mallet and Empty Flask. I don't know what to do next.

Michel Siebring, Holland

This is a sneaky game and at time of writing I too am stuck - although I'm further on than you. The most irritating thing about this game is that Nick Clarkeson has finished it already - but I'd rather kiss an Orc's bum than ask him for help. What you haven't realised is the purpose of the writing on the glass door in the Bank Office. Don't you think 'BAT VOMIT' is a strange thing to have written on your office door? But wait, you are viewing the writing from INSIDE the office. Put your brain in reverse and read it again. As well as this, have you been UNDER the pier?

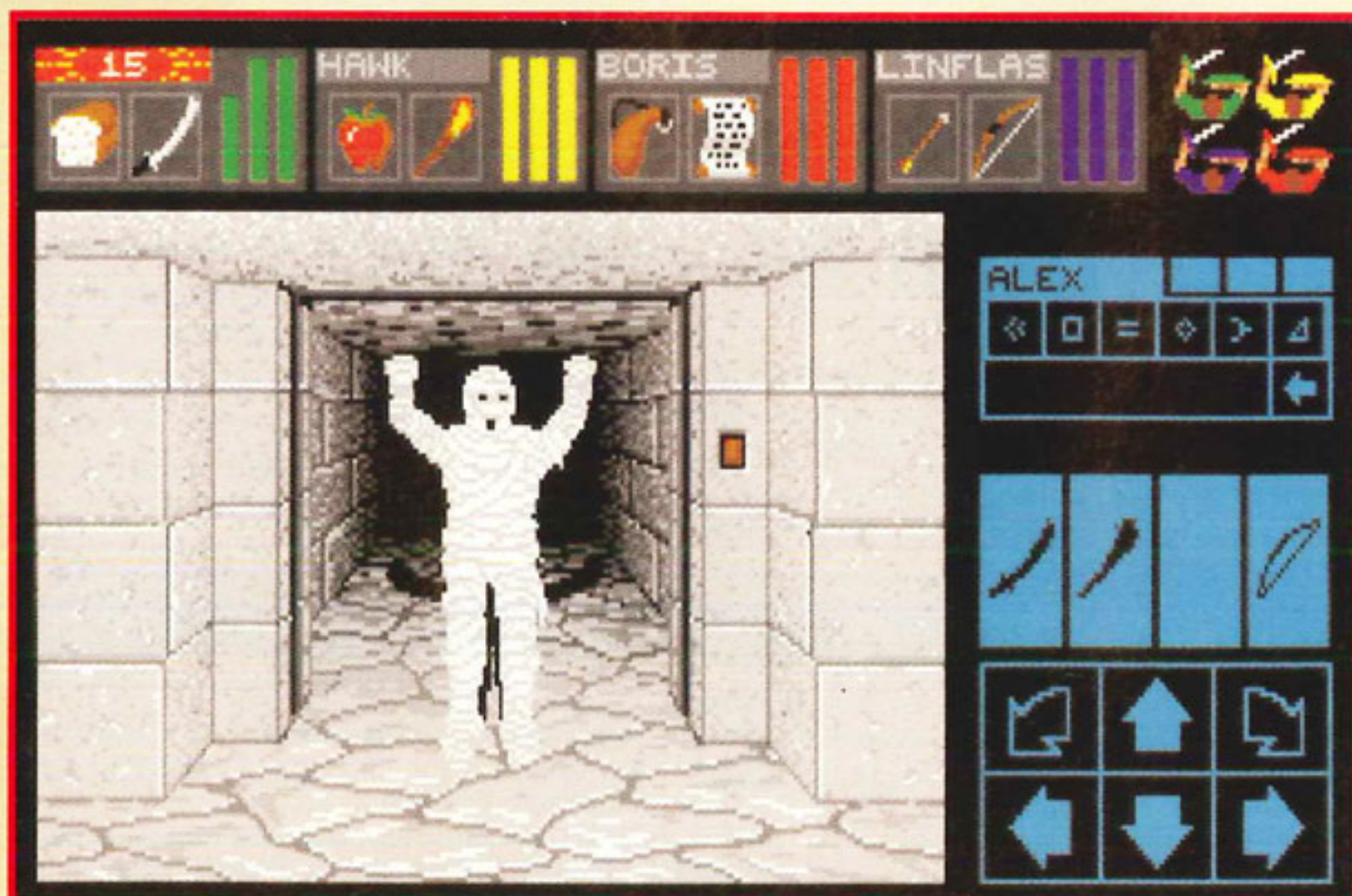
Quickies

M. Lips of Holland - If you want a boat ride, wait around on the N.E. bank. Nic Moron (oops! Moran), Stockport. Use the sick bag from the plane.

Honary Troll status is awarded this month to A.D. Silver for sending a beautifully typed list of the items and their uses from BEYOND ZORK. He also offered a part solution to The JOURNEY, which I foolishly forgot to accept. Hi Yo, Silver! - can you hear me? Anyone else got info on this game? BLOODWYCH is also being a real pest to me, let's have all the help you've got. Thanks also to Andrew Cato of Newcastle for sending a complete solution to the INDIANA ADVENTURE - two days after ST ACTION published one (stupid boy!). He was also anxious to point out that his is a boy's name. He's obviously been peeking at the howls of anguish I have been receiving from insulted letter writers. Well, if humans will come clambering under my bridge asking silly questions...

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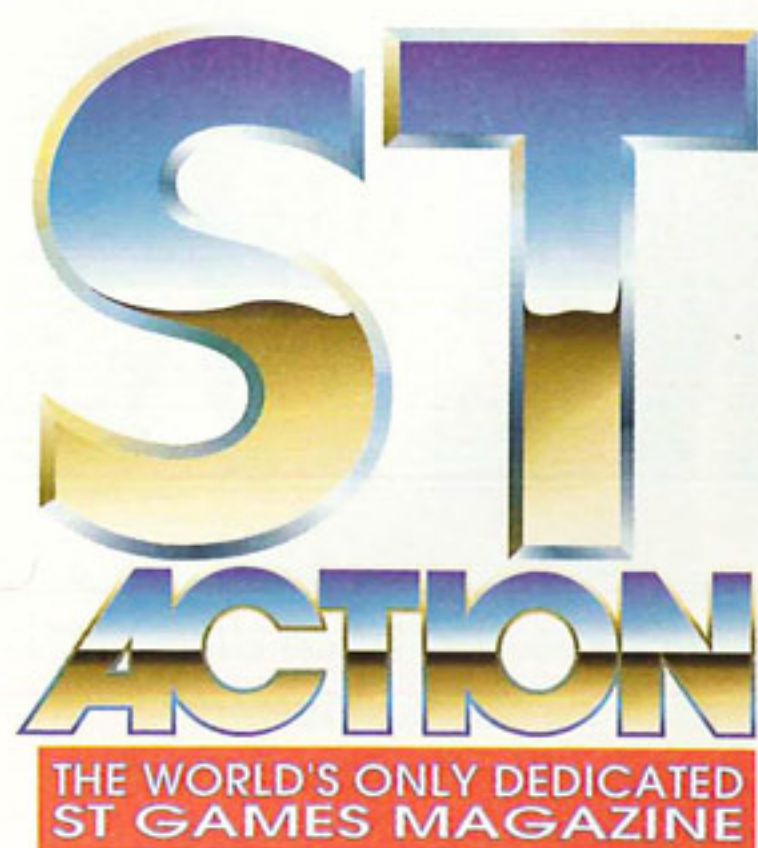
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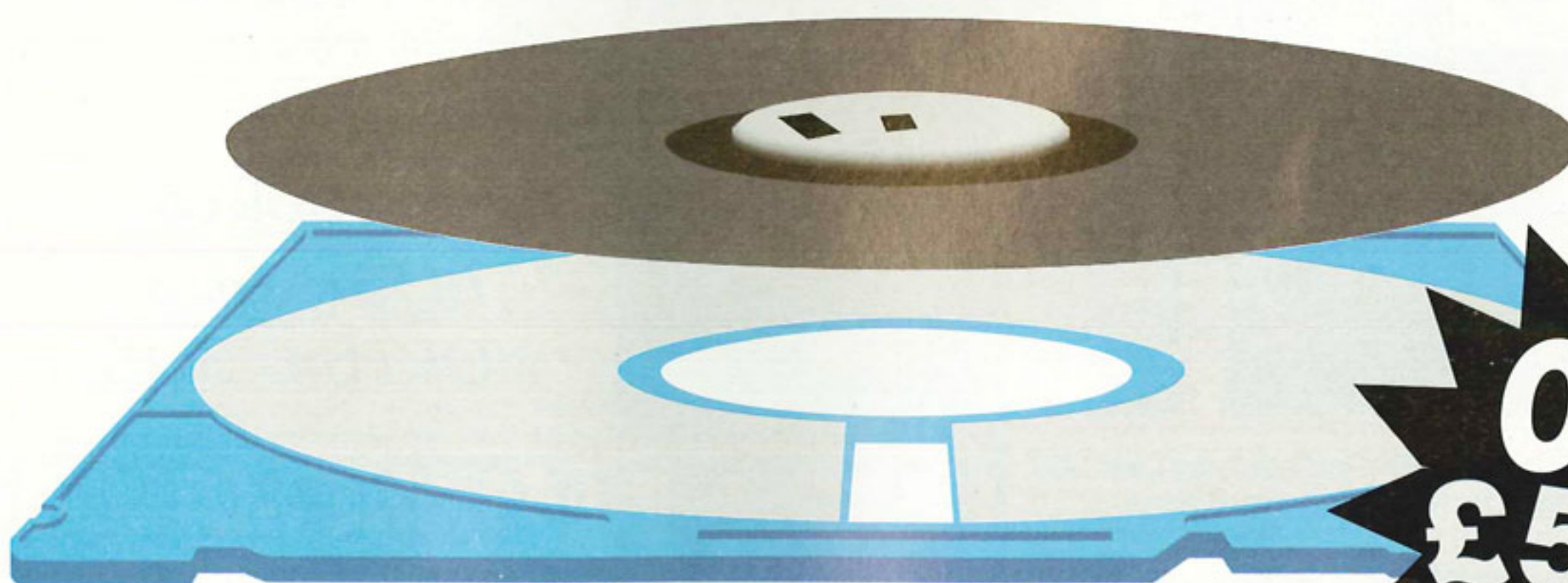
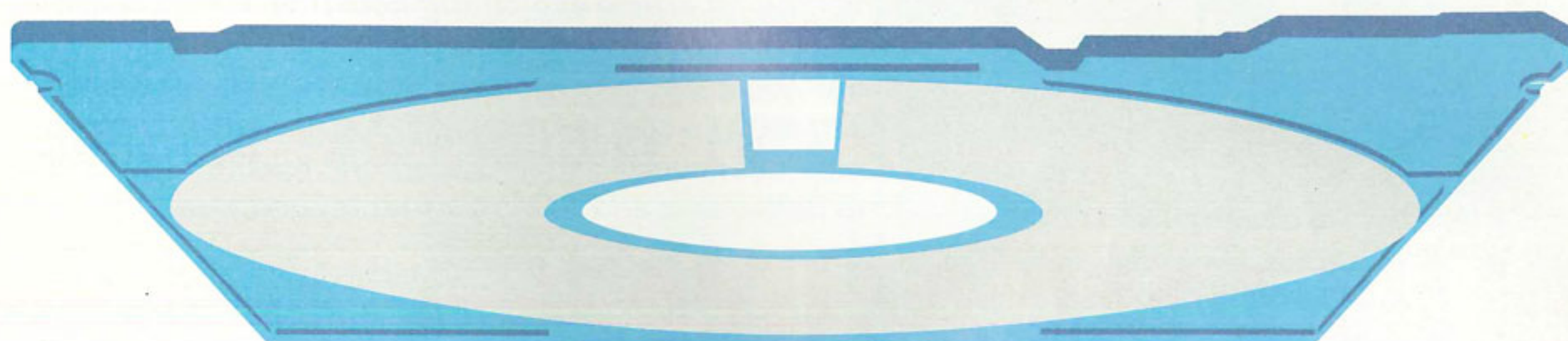
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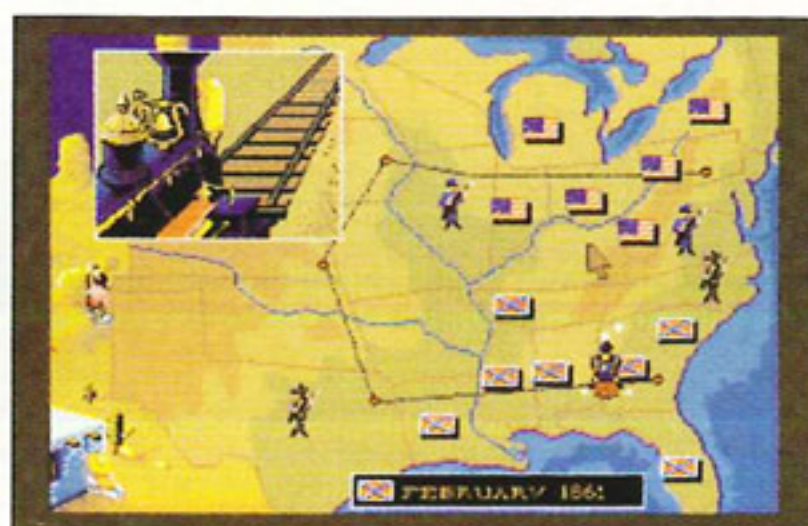
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YAK'S

Shw mae, Atarians! (That's Welsh for 'Greetings', by the way. There are some informal Welsh classes happening down my local at the moment, and I'm partaking). It's been an interesting month: Konix have got themselves into financial difficulties; I've been down to London to an absolutely wicked graphics exhibition; and I've also been to bed with a Lynx. Which isn't to say that I've developed a new and even weirder-than-usual taste for exotic carnivores; it's just that Atari lent me their new portable game system and seven games for the weekend just recently.

I got my mitts on the Lynx when I went down to talk to Atari about writing a game. They loaned me the Lynx on the condition that I returned it without fail the following Monday morning, and that I didn't blow it up. I won't go on at great length about the virtues of the hardware, as I did that last month. I can now confirm that, impressive though the hardware seemed after a couple of five-minute goes at the PC show, after a thorough (very thorough) testing session it's ten times more impressive. The screen is excellent, the unit is well-made, the controls are precise and responsive and they don't feel like they're going to wear out easily. Best of all, the games are very playable and well-programmed. My favourites were 'Gates of Zendocon', a jolly blaster with loads of bolt-ons and smart graphics (fractal fans should try entering the game with a level code of 'BROT') and 'Blue Lightning', which had been improved since my encounter with it at the PC show, and which features some stunning 'low-flying-over-mountain-range' type 3D graphics. The only complaint I could possibly make about the Lynx was that I got a stiff neck by playing it so much. You can even play it in bed last thing at night and first thing in the morning before you put your teeth in. If you lot reading this are at all inclined to arcade games and wicked hardware, you WILL buy a Lynx. End of story.

Talking of wicked hardware, last week I went to a computer graphics exhibition in Alexandra Palace. It was all well high-end stuff, hardly anything there under twenty grand, a lot of stuff considerably more. 1280x1024, 16-million colour systems were the order of the day, with the likes of Quantel and Silicon Graphics showing their all. Certainly nothing affordable (except perhaps the Parsec graphics system) but it was worth seeing just to get an idea of the sort of goodies which will be getting cheaper and entering the leisure market over the next ten years or so... hell, it was worth seeing just to have your brains blown out by some awesome systems (you thought the Amiga was good??). Besides, it was fun: because it was a

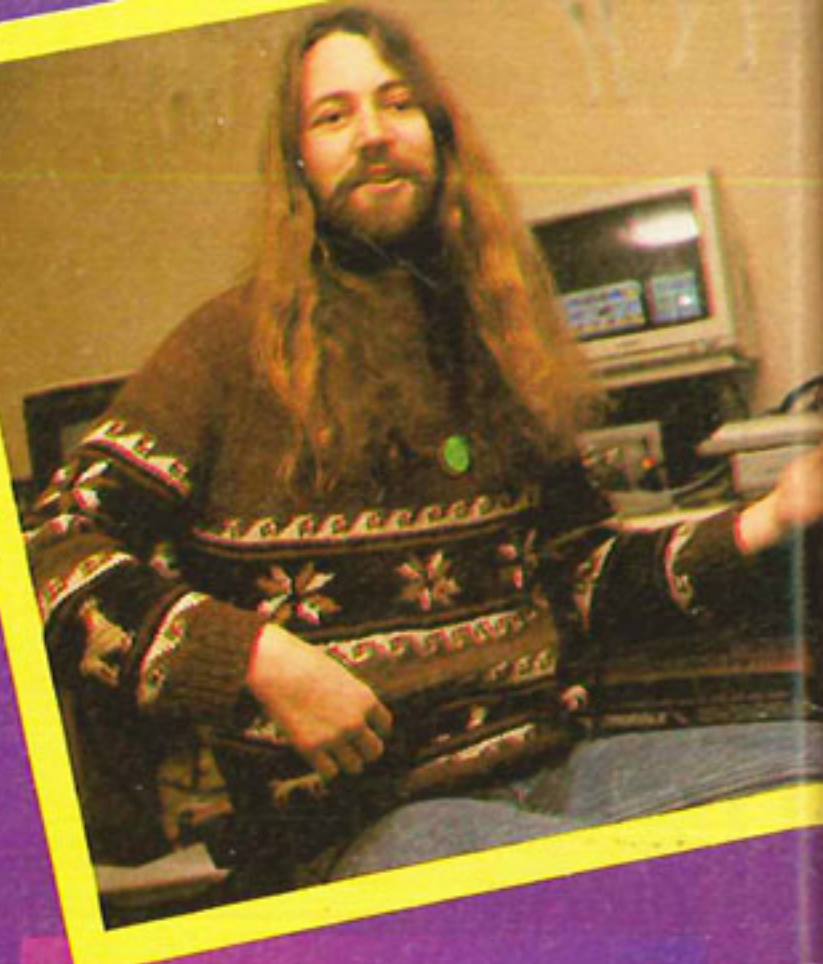
high-end exhibition most of the punters were typical suits with briefcases and Filofaxes, you know the sort, and it was fun to wander around in jeans and Afghan watching people trying to work out whether I was some kind of genius from IBM who was so good I was allowed to dress how I liked, or whether I was just a misplaced hippie. They'd talk to you whilst simultaneously craning sideways trying to read your visitors' badge in an attempt to determine whether you were Anyone Important; in my case this didn't help much as due to the wonders of modern technology my badge identified me as 'JEFF MINTER CYAK' from 'LIAMASOFT'. Anyway, the show was great; there were more megapixels than you could shake a pressure-sensitive stylus at and video projection systems so huge you could have lived inside them with a cat and two large goats and still had room to spare. And next time you think your ST is a pretty powerful system, bear this in mind: The Parsec graphics system, with 50MHz and 32-bit CPU, is about eight times faster than the ST. The Parsec is rated at 6.25 MIPS. Now, there was a Silicon Graphics 3-D workstation at the exhibition rated at 160 MIPS....

On the ST, apart from working on my future Atari game, I've been doing a spot of joystick-bashing with some of the latest games. First I checked out Xenon II; I thought after all the hype and reviewers frothing at the mouth, maybe there might actually be something worth seeing. What I found was a decidedly average vertical scroller with some admittedly zarjaz graphics but with some terrible collision-detection. Amazingly enough, not a single review of the game has commented on the detecol problem; it happens frequently enough to spoil the playability. You can't rely on a supposedly devastating hail of bullets to take out the enemies. Either the programmers decided to use unnaturally tiny collision-detection rectangles, or else they're only detecting half the sprites per frame-time; I don't know. Often when you're playing, though, you'll see your bullets actually overlapping aliens and they just pass right through. Bleeacch. This might be forgivable if the game was some startling new original design, but it's not; it's just vertically-scrolling Scramble with bolt-ons and occasional large aliens. I can imagine how the design process must have gone:

FIRST DESIGNER: Um, shall we do a game with a new control method? Use the mouse? Give the player greater freedom to interact with and choose his own course through the gameworld?

SECOND DESIGNER: We could do weird things with gravity, or have effects made of particle systems; we could have enemies which are smart and which learn how individual players play and modify their behaviour accordingly....

FIRST DESIGNER: Yeah - we could do weird stuff with fractal music, we could maybe experiment



with new kinds of weapon - get away from just loads of bullets; and we could give the player some mission to accomplish behind all the vapourise-the-aliens stuff - make 'im use his brain a bit....

BREADHEAD: Hey! You guys! Remember we want to make AS MUCH MONEY as we POSSIBLY CAN! I have to pay for my Porschel!

BOTH DESIGNERS: We'll do a vertically-scrolling Scramble with bolt-ons and occasional large aliens, then.

What I find particularly annoying is the way all the reviewers freaked out and the fact that none of them mentioned the collision-detect problem. From this I have concluded:

1: Game reviewers seldom study game designs very carefully, at least in the case of arcade-style games. As long as it looks pretty and has bolt-on weaponry they are happy. They don't want smart aliens or new weapons or control modes. Maybe they just want games which are easy.

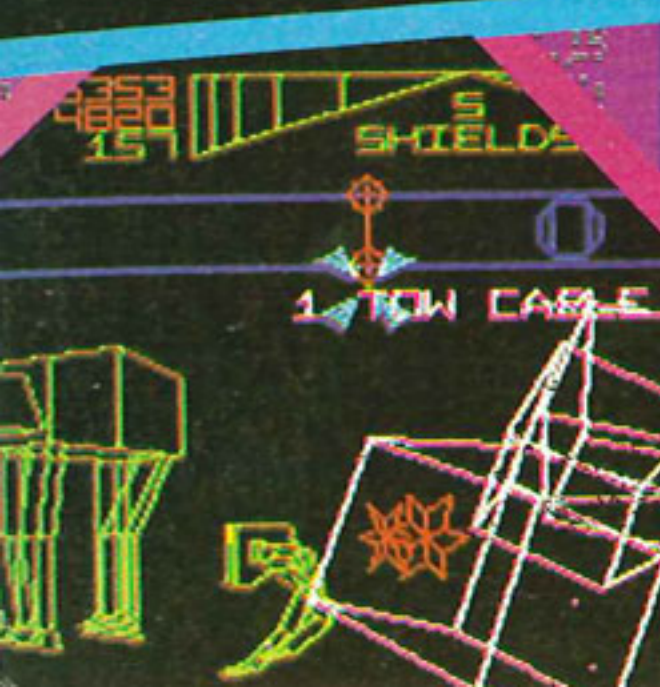
2: They all review games using a cheat mode. That way, they get to see all the levels and take nice screenshots; that way they don't pick up on things like collision-detect problems because they never actually have to play for real.

3: Pretty bitmaps will cover a multitude of sins.

4: Some reviewers are actually convinced by hype. You get some game company winding up for months about how they're going to produce the most sensational game in known space, then when they give the reviewers another vertical scroller they don't notice. This is most odd and I guess must stem from the same kind of reflex which makes American people send loads of money to all those nasty TV evangelists they have over there. You only have to watch ITV to rapidly perceive the truth: All Advertising is junk. And if advertising is junk, pre-release hype is junk squared, or at least junk shifted left a few times.

I'd better go and do just that if you're ever going to read this. I'll bid you all p'nawn da and pob hwyl until next time....

Oh yeah - before I go: Recommended Reading - 'Godel, Escher, Bach' by Douglas R. Hofstadter. Cheaper than Xenon II and a lot more fun...



YaK

IF GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS SCARED YOU OUT OF YOUR MIND...
...THIS'LL SCARE YOU OUT OF YOUR SKIN!

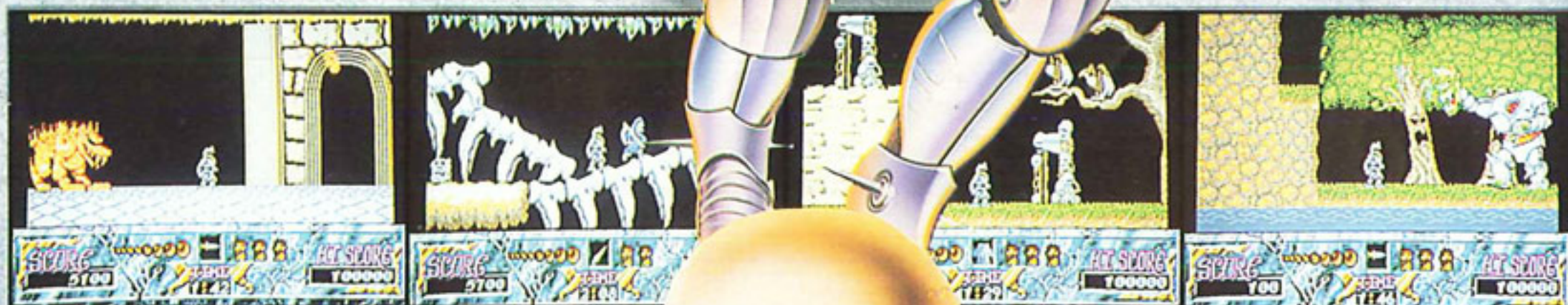
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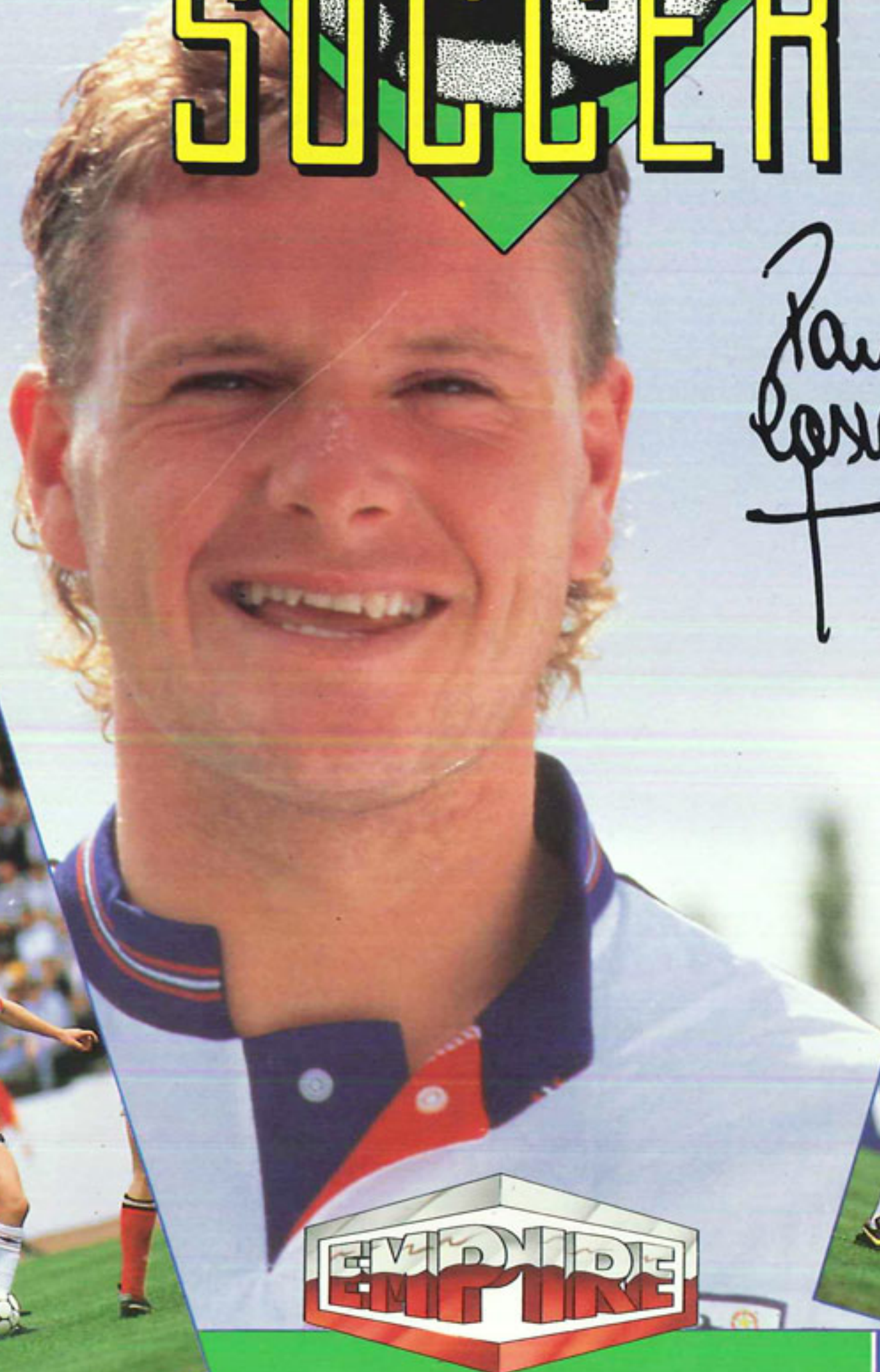
Screen shots from Atari ST version.

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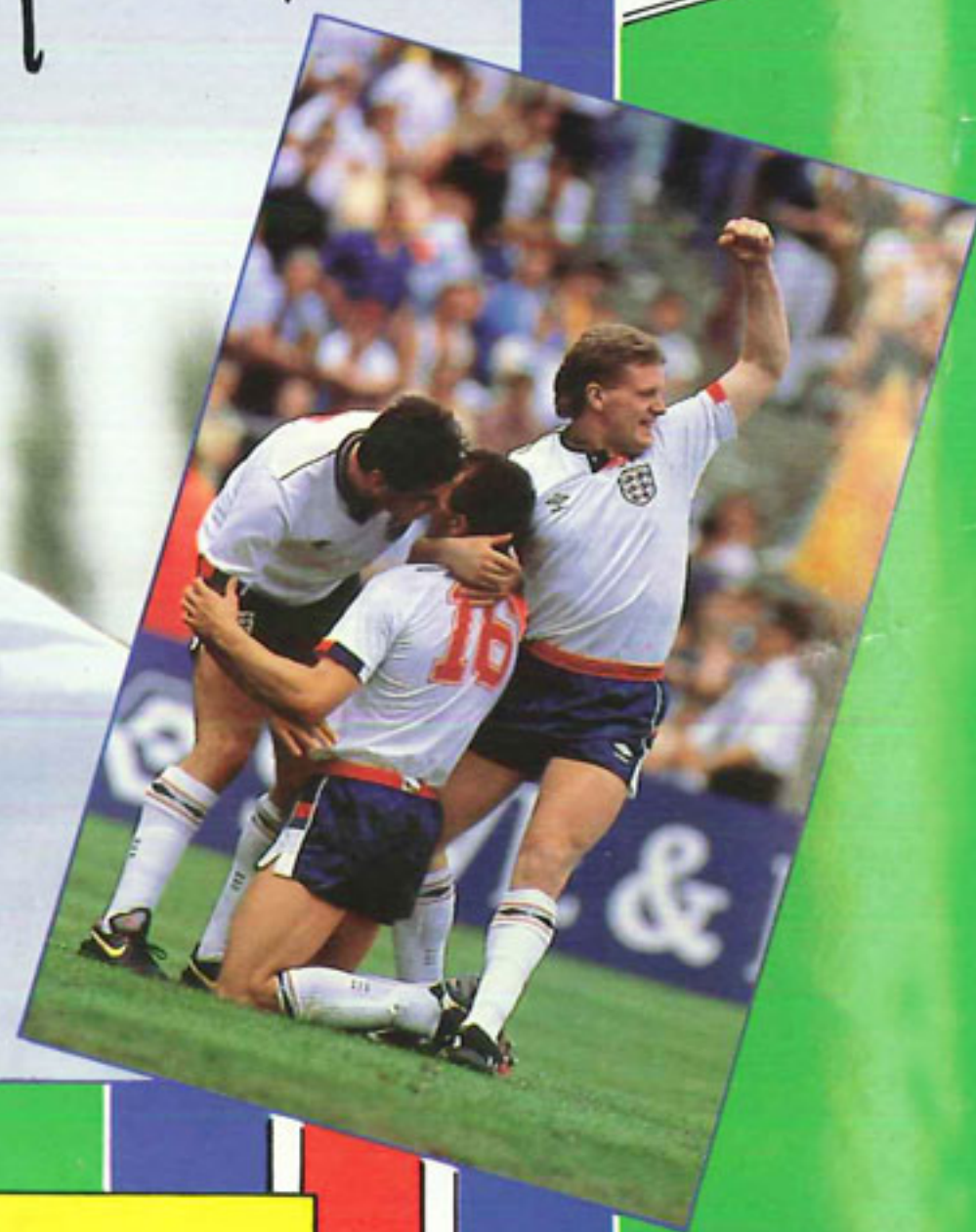
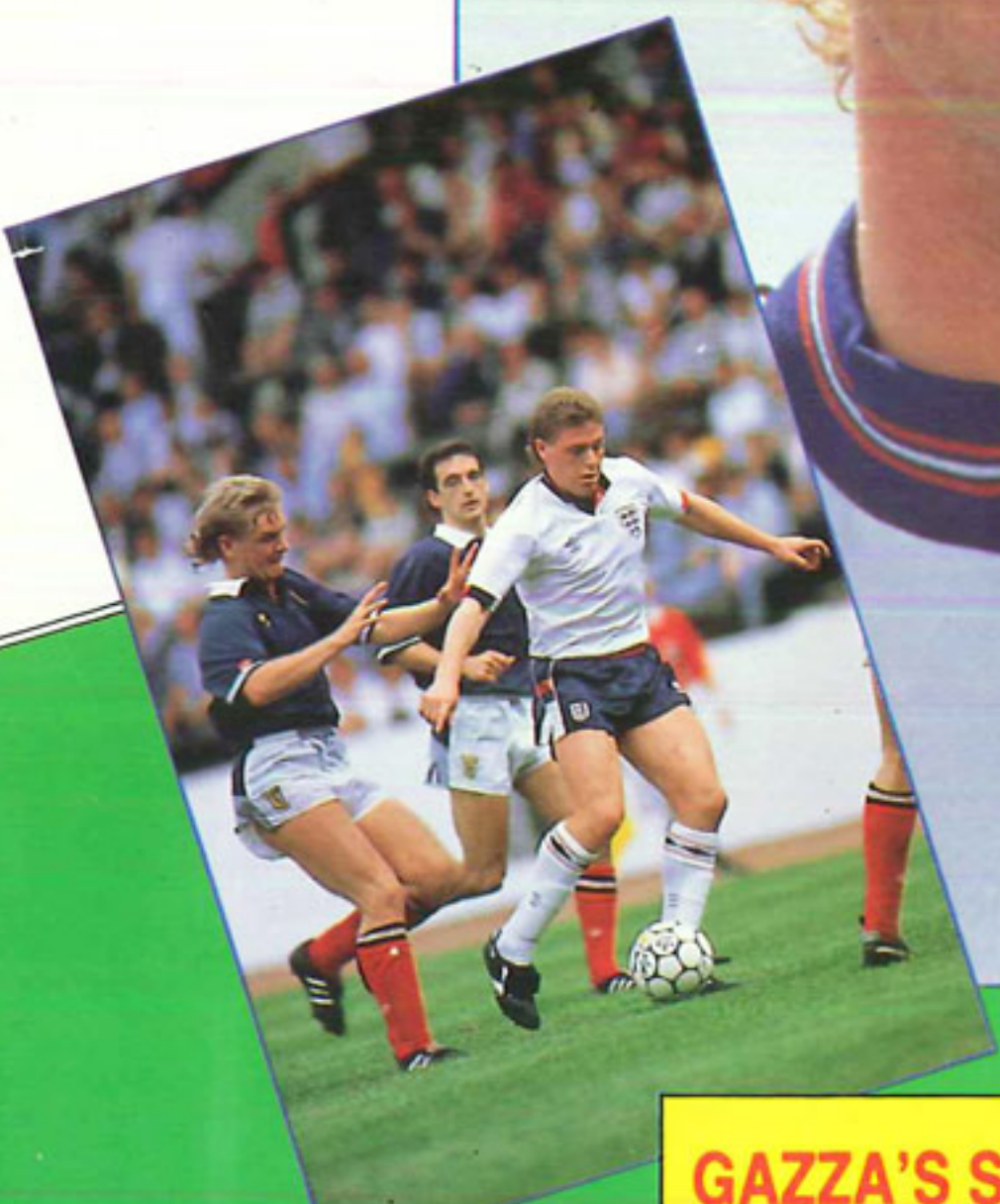
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